The Fur Trade of the Little North

Indians, Pedlars, and Englishmen East of Lake Winnipeg, 1760-1821

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1986

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PREFACE

No modern term precisely describes that region of the Canadian Shield which lies north of Lake Superior and east of Lake Winnipeg. The early Canadian fur traders, however, described it as Le Petit Nord, or the Little North,[1] distinguishing it from the vast area west and north of Lake Winnipeg denominated Le Grand Nord, or the Great North. More specifically, the Little North encompassed the area bordered on the south by Lake Superior and on the west by Lake Winnipeg. To the north it stretched to the edge of the Hudson Bay Lowlands; and east to the divide between the Albany and Moose rivers (see fig. 1). It excluded the Hudson Bay Lowlands because fur bearers were not plentiful there, and fur traders avoided these marshy wetlands. Its southern boundary approached the main canoe route from Grand Portage to Lake of the Woods. There was intensive fur trade activity along this major routeway, but its development was largely independent of the trade in the Little North. Similarly, the Moose River basin fur trade was carried on separately; it too developed quite independently from that to the west along the Albany River and other rivers which drain the interior of the Little North.

The expansion of European fur traders into the Little North proceeded generally in an east to west direction along the rivers and lakes that were the highways of the trade. Often the complex topography afforded no simple or clearcut routes, but the value of the furs they sought encouraged the traders to follow Indian guides and travel routes through the rugged and uncharted shield country. Their passage was impeded by dangerous rapids and waterfalls, and by long stretches of shallow water where laborious portages were necessary. In the larger lakes storms could leave them windbound for days, and in small lakes they were often mired in thick swamp. By the 1790s a few Montreal-based and Hudson's Bay Company traders finally crossed into the Lake Winnipeg basin and built posts along the rivers draining westward into the lake. This "East Winnipeg Country" (fig. 1), as it was known to the HBC men who worked there in the early nineteenth century, marked the western geographical limit of fur trade expansion into the Little North.

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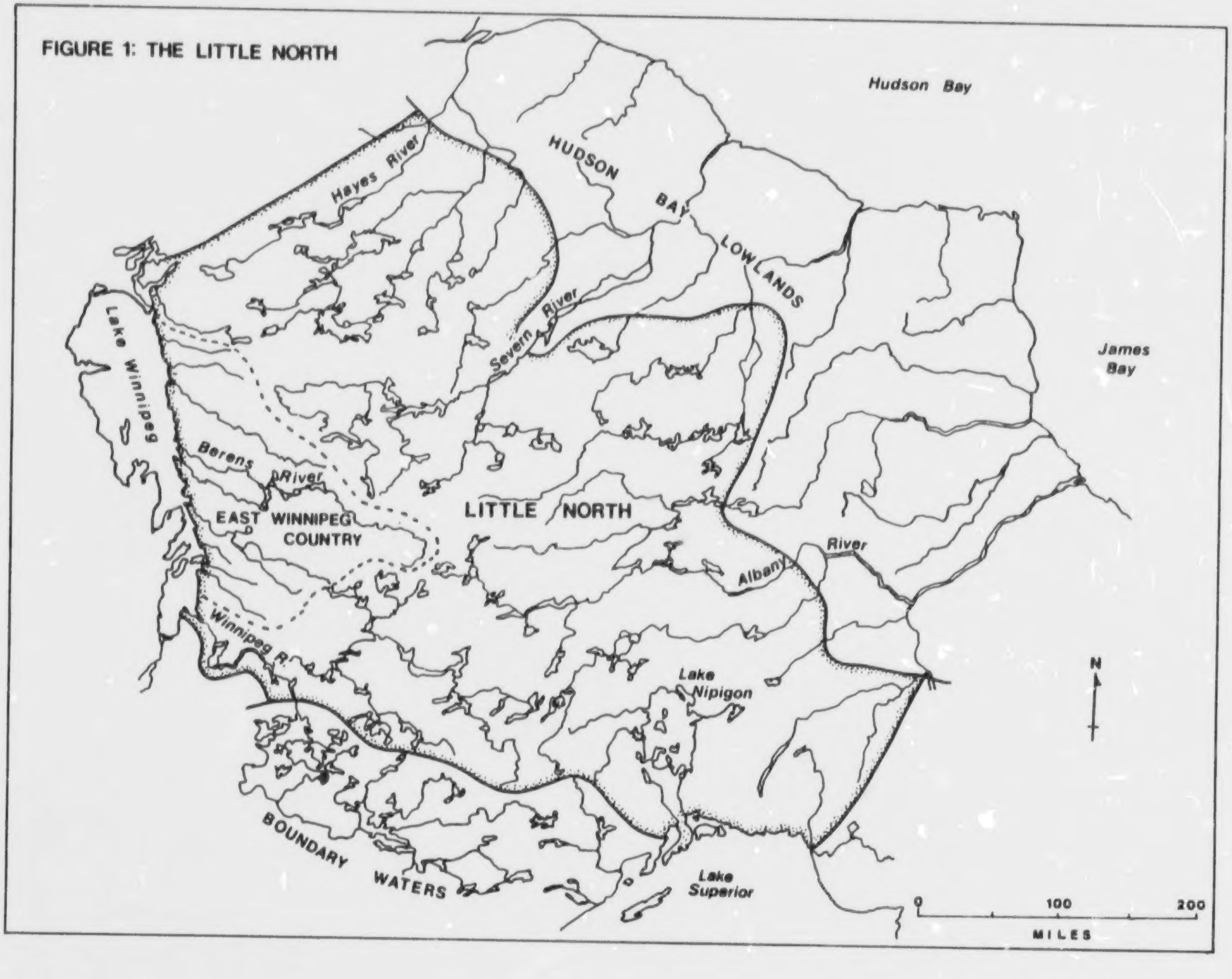
[1] The first record of the term Petit Nord can be found in the 1729 journal of Louis-Joseph Gaultier de la Vérendrye. Describing the Indians who lived near the outlet of Lake of the Woods, La Vérendrye stated that "they can get all their wants from the English of the petit Nord" (Burpee 1927:56). The "English" were Hudson's Bay Company traders, likely those at Albany Fort on James Bay. HBC records of the time indicate that Indians living near Lake of the Woods travelled to Albany Fort to trade (HBCA, B.3/a/3, fo. 27).

FIGURE 1: THE LITTLE NORTH


Hudson Bay
James Bay
HUDSON BAY LOWLANDS
Hayes River
Severn River
Lake Winnipeg
Berens River
EAST WINNIPEG COUNTRY
LITTLE NORTH
Albany River
Winnipeg R.
Lake Nipigon
BOUNDARY WATERS
Lake Superior
N
0
100
200
MILES

There were two major routeways into the Little North. One entered the region from James Bay and ascended the Albany River. The other began along the north shore of Lake Superior and reached in by way of the Nipigon River. The route along the Albany River was pioneered by men from the Hudson's Bay Company, while Canadian traders from the St. Lawrence Valley and Great Lakes developed the Nipigon routeway. The distinctive patterns of these two movements into the Little North reflected in many ways the disparate cultural backgrounds of the men who conducted the fur trade. The HBC traders were mainly Orkneymen[2] who were initially unfamiliar with travelling and living in the boreal forest. Many Canadians, on the other hand, were hardened to wilderness living from an early age. They were especially adept at handling birchbark canoes, which were the vehicles sine qua non of the fur trade. Orkneymen were used to working in wooden fishing boats that were rowed, and found the canoes and paddles awkward to handle. Canoes were also difficult to procure at the HBC bayside factories which were north of the range of suitable birchbark. These factors prompted the company to employ flat-bottomed, shallow-draught boats, or batteaux (as they were called in the HBC records), in its inland expansion into the Little North. In addition to differences in labour force and mode of transport, fundamental differences in fur trading strategies distinguished the St. Lawrence River entrepreneurs from those on James Bay. The Hudson's Bay Company had been content for many years after its inception in 1670 to remain on the shores of Hudson and James bays and wait for the annual arrival of Indians from the interior uplands. The Canadians pursued a more active pattern of inland trading, establishing posts near the winter hunting grounds of the Indians and then travelling out to the actual Indian encampments to trade en derouine, as they described it.

When the Hudson's Bay Company decided to move inland in the 1770s it did so with men who were reluctant to adopt proven Canadian methods of trading. As time progressed and trading posts were built side by side, the men from Albany Fort learned much from their Canadian counterparts. Although the Canadians undoubtedly incorporated some aspects of the HBC trading method, it was the men from Albany who benefitted most in this exchange. By the time of the union of the Hudson's Bay Company and the St. Lawrence-based North West Company in 1821, the two systems of trade were more alike than different.

The fur trade in the Little North was characterized by several distinct stages of development. The first was a lengthy period of long-distance and middleman trading conducted by the Northern

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[2] The Hudson's Bay Company recruited most of its labour force in the eighteenth century from the Orkney Islands, north of Scotland. Company ships regularly called into the Orkney ports for provisions and men before crossing the Atlantic to Hudson Bay. In 1805 seventy-one percent of the HBC labour force were Orkneymen, and about half of these came from the West Mainland region (Mainland being the largest of the Orkney Islands) (HBCA, B.42/d/85; B.59/d/22; B.239/d/132; B.198/d/75; B.3/d/117; B.135/d/76).

Algonquians who lived in the region. A purely native exchange system was in place long before the advent of European goods in the seventeenth century. The first European goods probably reached the Little North by way of Algonquian and Iroquoian middleman trading networks based in the St. Lawrence valley in the early seventeenth century.

Direct trade between Europeans and the native peoples of the Little North began in the latter part of the seventeenth century as missionaries and French explorers ventured into the lands north and west of Lake Superior. About the same time, English fur traders of the Hudson's Bay Company settled on the shores of Hudson and James bays and attracted long-distance Indian traders from the interior of the Little North, offering them an alternative market. During the period prior to the eighteenth century the Indians were solely responsible for transporting furs to the trading posts as long-distance traders or through neighbouring middlemen. In this way, they exercised some control over the exploitation of the fur resource.

In the eighteenth century this pattern of trade was altered when French traders began to establish outposts within the Little North. The spread of French traders into the region cannot be documented precisely since a large number of coureurs de bois engaged in illicit fur trading outside the realm of official French policy. However, by the 1720s it was clear that the numbers of French traders had increased significantly within the Little North, and the effects of their activities were felt at the Hudson's Bay Company posts. The French maintained an active trade in the region until the fall of New France to British forces in 1760. The pattern of trade during the French period was considerably different from the earlier Indian-controlled fur trade. The proliferation of trading posts at various locations within the Little North removed the necessity of long-distance travel for most Indian traders, and undercut the basis for middleman exchange networks.

The British conquest of New France in 1760 disrupted the pattern of fur trade in the Little North. The abandonment of French trading posts probably caused a reversion to the earlier Indian long-distance and middleman practices. This was short-lived, however, as new entrepreneurs emerged from Canada to conduct the fur trade in the northwest. These Canadians quickly re-established the earlier French pattern of the trade in the Little North. Led by Ezekiel Solomon, the newcomers were even more vigorous than the French in establishing posts within the region. Their success was such that Solomon was able to monopolize, for a brief period, most of the fur trade in the Little North. The Hudson's Bay Company saw its share dwindle to almost nothing as the Indians who had previously travelled long distances to HBC posts from the interior were intercepted by the Canadians. By the 1770s the HBC posts were receiving furs only from their immediate vicinity.

The move inland by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1777 to counter the Canadians signalled the beginning of a new era in the Little North.

As the Hudson's Bay Company built more inland trading posts and penetrated into areas that had long been the preserve of its rivals from Montreal, the competition for furs at the local level increased dramatically. This spurred the extension of fur trade posts into virtually every corner of the Little North. By 1791 posts had been constructed along the main river transportation systems. Increasing competition pushed the traders into tributary water systems and the network of posts filled in the areas between the major river basins.

By 1805, however, the number of traders and posts had peaked, and the fur resource was beginning to show signs of collapse under extreme hunting and trapping pressure. Between 1805 and 1821 the fur traders re-organized their commercial practices in an attempt to sustain profits from a resource base that was slowly eroding away. This meant abandoning some posts, but it also translated into more expensive, aggressive, and sometimes violent measures to win the Indians' furs and loyalties. Finally, in 1821, the long period of competition came to an end with the merger of the Hudson's Bay and North West companies.

The Hudson's Bay Company emerged from the 1821 union with monopoly control over the fur trade in most parts of the Little North. This meant that the company could dictate many of the terms of trade to the Indians who supplied the furs. In contrast to the pre-1821 period of competition, the years after 1821 were characterized by trading post abandonment. A return to the older pattern of long-distance travel became necessary for some Indians who found themselves hundreds of miles from a trading post.

Within a few decades, the fur trade frontier in the Little North had come and gone. Rivers and lakes that were host to bustling activity in the early years of the nineteenth century reverted to a more tranquil state after 1821. As the years passed, time erased most traces of the fur traders from human memory and from the land itself.

The following study seeks to elucidate the historical and geographical development of the fur trade in the Little North. It is based primarily on the archival documents of the Hudson's Bay Company, held in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Journals, reports, correspondence, account books, maps, and other documents provided a wealth of information on the fur trade in the Little North. They shed light not only upon the Hudson's Bay Company's business, but also upon the activity of rival traders and the Indians who provided the furs and other natural products which were essential for survival. There is no comparable collection of documents for the Montreal-based trade, so that published primary and secondary sources had to be used as a framework for understanding the activities of Canadians in the Little North. A notable exception was the George Nelson papers held in the Metropolitan Toronto Public Library. Nelson, an XY and North West Company trader (and, after 1821, a Hudson's Bay Company employee), wrote a number of journals, letters, and reminiscences of his time spent as a fur trader in parts of the Little North. I am indebted to Jennifer S.H. Brown who directed me to the Nelson collection, and allowed me to read her typed transcripts of the papers.

Quotations from archival sources have retained the original spelling and grammar contained in the documents. Personal and place names have also been transcribed according to common contemporary usage. Where possible the correct or alternate spellings of these names have been included in the text. References to Hudson's Bay Company archival material are denoted by the prefix HBCA, followed by the catalogue number of the particular document. Material from the Public Archives of Canada is referenced by the letters PAC. Quotations from the George Nelson papers are denominated by the name Nelson, followed by the date or name of the document and the original page number(s).

The groundwork for this study was completed during the period of my employment as a research assistant for the Historical Atlas of Canada project from 1979 to 1980. During 1980-81, I conducted more detailed and exhaustive research on the fur trade in the Little North, completing my Master's thesis in the Department of Geography at the University of Manitoba (1981). The thesis, entitled "The Historical Geography of the Fur Trade of the Little North and its Expansion into the East Winnipeg Country to 1821," formed the core for the present work.

During the course of my research and writing I have had the benefit of assistance and scholarly criticism from many people. Two persons have been particularly important in shaping my knowledge of the fur trade. D. Wayne Moodie, professor of geography at the University of Manitoba, has given support and guidance over the years which has been deeply appreciated. Jennifer S.H. Brown,professor of history at the University of Winnipeg, has given much time and effort in carefully reviewing and editing the text. Her scholarship and knowledge have greatly enhanced my understanding of the Canadian fur trade.

Several other persons have assisted in other important ways. Harry Duckworth has made available to me his important, unpublished paper on the Nipigon fur trade presented at the Fifth North American Fur Trade Conference in 1985. Keith Widder has kindly provided information on various aspects of the early fur trade at Michilimackinac. David Pentland made important suggestions relating to linguistic questions, and also offered valuable comments on the general depiction of the fur trade. Barry Kaye and Gerald Friesen were members of my Master's thesis committee, and their critical comments have been appreciated. Arthur (Skip) J. Ray has been influential in shaping some of my ideas on the fur trade, both in my reading of his work and in private discussions. Leo Waisberg has helped to bring me closer to the practical application of fur trade research. Thanks are also due to Shirlee Anne Smith, Keeper of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, and her staff for assisting in my archival research. Alex Regiec helped prepare the maps and graphs, and Norman Haywood was responsible for typing the text.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Joanne. She would not profess to be a scholar of the fur trade, but she has patiently listened to many rambling lectures on the subject.

Chapter I

THE FUR TRADE OF THE LITTLE NORTH TO 1760

The first European explorations into the Little North were made by French missionaries and traders who journeyed inland from their settlements on the St. Lawrence River in the seventeenth century. Although Samuel de Champlain visited the country of the Huron Indians adjacent to Georgian Bay as early as 1615, no Frenchman was able to reach Lake Superior until 1642. In that year two Jesuit missionaries, Charles Raymbault and Isaac Jogues, travelled to the rapids which mark the entrance to Lake Superior. There they met about 2,000 Indians who were called the *Pauoitigoueieuhak*, or *Pahouitingwach Irini*. The French later referred to these people as the *Saulteurs*, after the rapids which came to be known as Sault Ste. Marie (Thwaites 1959, vol. 23:223; vol. 54:133). From these Indians the Jesuits learned of other populous Indian nations who lived to the west, such as the *Nadouessis* (Dakota) and the *Kiristinons* (Cree). Father Paul Ragueneau observed in 1648 that the Saulteurs controlled the passage west to Lake Superior where numerous other Indian nations dwelled (Thwaites 1959, vol. 33:149).

The trading relationships that had existed among the Indian nations of the Upper Great Lakes were shaken by the Iroquois wars of the 1640s and 1650s which destroyed Huronia and laid waste to many Algonquin encampments between Lake Huron and Montreal. This war zone effectively cut off the fur traffic along the Ottawa River, a route that had supplied the French with most of their furs. This situation was first challenged in 1654 by two ambitious French traders, Médard Chouart des Groseilliers and an unknown companion, who ventured up the Ottawa River in an attempt to re-open the trade. Two years later they returned to Quebec with some two hundred and fifty *Outaouak* Indians who brought with them a rich cargo of furs.[3]

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[3] It is difficult to ascertain exactly who these Outaouak Indians were and where they came from. The word Outaouak meant traders in Algonquian languages, and it may have been applied to a number of Algonquian-speaking tribes, including the Ottawa Indians who were also known to the French as the Cheveux Relevées. Father Claude Dablon commented in 1670 that "The Upper Algonquins are commonly given the name Outaouaks, because, of more than thirty different Nations that are found in these countries [Upper Great Lakes], the first to come down to our French settlements were the Outaouaks" (Thwaites 1959, vol. 54:127).

Des Groseilliers and his companion also brought back information on the condition of the Indians in the pays d'en haut, or Upper Country, and reported on the Indian trading networks that had kept the fur trade alive during the period of the Iroquois blockade on the Ottawa River. The trade routes were said to be focused on James Bay where furs were exchanged for French goods that were carried north from the St. Lawrence River by Indian middlemen operating on the St. Maurice and Saguenay rivers. From these trading rendezvous on James Bay, other Indians, some possibly acting as middlemen, brought French goods south to the Upper Great Lakes. One trade route began on the north shore of Lake Superior, and probably reached James Bay by way of the Nipigon River, Lake Nipigon, and the Albany River (Thwaites 1959, vol. 44:241-243).

Further evidence for a Nipigon trading connection to James Bay was given to Father Gabriel Druillettes by a Nipissing chief named Awatanik in the summer of 1660. Druillettes met Awatanik somewhere along the Saguenay River as the Jesuit priest attempted to make a journey north to James Bay. Awatanik, who had been baptized at Lake Nipissing before the destruction of Huronia, told Druillettes that he had been on a long journey that had taken him from Lake Superior to James Bay and then south eventually to reach the Saguenay River (Thwaites 1959, vol.45:217). Awatanik had likely been familiar with the Lake Nipigon country since it was a place of refuge for the Nipissing nation after the Iroquois incursions. In 1667 Father Claude Allouez visited Lake Nipigon and found a Nipissing village somewhere on its shore (Thwaites 1959, vol. 49:69). Nicolas Perrot, a French fur trader, also reported that the Nipissing were living at Lake Nipigon along with the Amikwa, or nation of the Beaver, another Algonquian-speaking group who had earlier lived on the north shore of Lake Huron (Blair 1911-12, vol. 1:173).

It is clear from the reports of missionaries and traders that the Nipissing and other displaced Algonquian-speaking groups had re-established their middleman trade north of Lake Nipigon during the 1650s and 1660s. In so doing they must have displaced the Indians who had previously lived in the region. Awatanik told Druillettes that "The whole length of its coast [Lake Superior] is lined with Algonkin Nations, fear of the Iroquois having forced them to seek there an asylum" (Thwaites 1959, vol. 45:219). It is unlikely that the region could have supported both the refugee population and the local Indians, so that a general westward territorial shift must have followed in the wake of the diaspora of the 1650s. However, this may have been only temporary as at least some of the Nipissing were reported to be back at Lake Nipissing as early as 1671 (Thwaites 1959, vol. 56:99), and the Amikwa had also moved back to the north shore of Lake Huron in 1670 (ibid., vol. 54:133).

The French were eager to explore the lands north and west of Lake Superior for reasons of commerce and conversion. They were also sanguine about the discovery of a route to the Pacific Ocean (see, for example, Thwaites 1959, vol. 45:221-223). However, relations between the French and the Iroquois remained tenuous during much of the latter half of the seventeenth century and attempts at western exploration were limited. Father René Menard managed to reach Lake Superior in 1660 with a returning party of "Outawaks" or trading Indians. He wintered on the south shore of the lake at "the great bay of Ste. Therese" (Keweenaw Bay), and established the mission of St. Esprit on Chequamagon Bay in the spring of 1661 (Thwaites 1959, vol. 46:139-141). At Chequamagon, Menard discovered a major settlement of Indians who had fled the Iroquois wars to the east.

Another meeting place for the refugee nations was Sault Ste. Marie. The Jesuits reported that the Indians who lived to the west would gather at the Sault before journeying to Montreal with their furs. The Sault was famous for its abundant whitefish which could be easily taken in dip nets below the rapids, especially during the fall spawning run (Thwaites 1959, vol. 54:129-131). During the late seventeenth century, large game, especially moose, was reported to be plentiful in the vicinity, and this too attracted Indians (Blair 1911-12, vol. 1:221). The availability of fish and game enabled large groups of Indians to gather seasonally at the Sault. In 1668, Father Claude Allouez reported that there were two thousand people there (Thwaites 1959, vol. 52:213), the same number that Raymbault and Jogues recorded in 1642 (ibid., vol. 24:225).

In 1662 des Groseilliers made another journey to Lake Superior. This time he travelled with his brother-in-law, Pierre-Esprit Radisson, and they spent the winter at Chequamagon. Radisson later claimed in his memoirs that, in the spring of 1663, he travelled to the "North Sea," or James Bay. This has been disputed by some scholars,[4] but his narrative of the journey provides convincing evidence that he was familiar with the route to the bay. His description of the middleman trade centred on James Bay further emphasized the strategic importance of the country north of Lake Superior.

Realizing the significance of the northern bay, Radisson and des Groseilliers visited London in 1665 and convinced a group of English entrepreneurs to invest in a trading venture to James Bay. In 1668 des Groseilliers sailed to the mouth of the Rupert River on board the Nonsuch, and returned the following year to England with a rich cargo of furs. His return signalled the establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company, a chartered, joint-stock trading company that was granted exclusive rights by the English crown to the commerce of the huge Hudson Bay watershed. Soon, other trading posts were established at the mouths of the principal rivers flowing into the bay: Moose River in 1672, Nelson River (later removed to the Hayes River) in 1682, Albany River in 1683, Severn River in 1685, East Main River in 1685, and Churchill River in 1689.

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[4] Grace Lee Nute insisted that the journey could not have taken place because there was insufficient time to travel to the bay and then to Montreal (Nute 1982:536).

The English activities on Hudson Bay caused immediate alarm among the French officials in the St. Lawrence Valley. Father Henri Nouvel, who was stationed at the Sault Ste. Marie mission, wrote to Governor General Louis de Buade de Frontenac at Quebec on 29 May 1673, and informed him that "The english have already diverted a great many of the inland savages who visit lake Superior" (Thwaites 1959, vol. 57:21). Indians who lived as far west as Rainy Lake and Lake of the Woods were reported to be travelling to Albany Fort instead of going to Sault Ste. Marie (Margry 1876-86, vol. 6:20-31). To counter these movements, Daniel Greysolon Dulhut, an explorer and entrepreneur, proposed to establish a blockade by building several trading posts at key locations on the borders of Lake Superior (Zoltany 1982:263). Officials in Quebec were initially opposed to Dulhut's proposals, but he was finally given a commission in 1683 to trade and explore in the Upper Lakes region. His first action was to build a trading post on Lake Nipigon. From here he claimed that he could stop the "Kristinos and Monsonis"[5] from taking their furs to Albany Fort, and win them over to the French side (Margry 1876-86, vol. 6:30-31). He built the post in the fall of 1684, at the head of Lake Nipigon near "Rivière a la Manne" (ibid., vol. 6:51). Although the exact location of the post is uncertain, it appears to have been built on the northeastern side of the lake, possibly on Ombabika Bay. Shortly after his arrival at Lake Nipigon, Dulhut wrote to François Charon de La Barre at Quebec that the nations of the *Kilistinos*, *Assinipoulacs*, *Gens de la Sapinière*, *Opemens d'Acheliny*, *Outouloubys*, and *Tabitibys* had all promised to trade with him rather than with the English.[6]

Despite Dulhut's optimistic report, the French officials in the St. Lawrence valley decided that the HBC posts had to be removed by force. The new governor general of New France, Jacques-René Brisay de

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[5] The Kristinos and Monsonis referred to by Dulhut are probably the same people later contacted by la Vérendrye at Lake of the Woods and Rainy Lake respectively. The Kristinos have been identified with Cree, but the Monsoni have been difficult to trace. Some have suggested a connection with the Moose River area of northern Ontario (Hodge 1912:312), while others have argued that they were a Cree group (Bishop 1974:312). However, a document attributed to la Vérendrye clearly indicates a close association with Ojibwa as the Monsoni are described in it as speaking "Saulteaux" (PAC, MG18, B12: fo. 37).

[6] The Kilistinos and Assinipoulacs have been associated by many historians and anthropologists with Cree and Assiniboine. David H. Pentland's synonymy of the Northern Ojibwa (Pentland 1981:241) places the Gens de la Sapinière and the Outouloubys within the realm of Ojibwa-speaking groups north of Lake Superior. He also identifies the Opemens d'Acheliny with the so-called Gens de Terres, a widely used term to identify the people living inland from Lake Superior and James Bay (ibid., 215). The Tabitibys were likely Indians who lived near present Lake Abitibi. Pentland believes that they were probably Cree (ibid., 288).

Denonville, suggested in 1685 that the posts on James Bay be seized by an overland expedition, while Port Nelson on Hudson Bay be taken by a naval campaign.[7] Ultimately, only an overland expedition was organized, and it set out from Montreal in March of 1686. Led by Captain Pierre de Troyes, the party also included thirty soldiers, seventy Canadian canoemen, and a Jesuit priest, Antoine Silvy (Kenyon and Turnbull 1971:24). They proceeded up the Ottawa River, crossed the height of land to Lake Abitibi, and then descended the Moose River to James Bay. In quick succession, and without bloodshed, the French took Moose Fort, Rupert House, and Albany Fort. It was impossible for them to reach Port Nelson by an overland route, so that post remained under the control of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Following de Troyes's victory in James Bay, there was an intermittent struggle between the French and English for control of the bayside posts. The Hudson's Bay Company regained the entire bay trade in 1693 when James Knight captured Albany Fort and his men burned Moose Fort and Rupert House. The following year Port Nelson fell to French naval forces led by Pierre le Moyne, sieur d'Iberville. In 1696 the English recaptured it, but lost it again the following year when Iberville returned to the bay. The French remained in control of the Nelson River area and the English held sway in James Bay until 1713 when the whole of Hudson Bay was ceded to England by the Treaty of Utrecht.

Barred from Hudson Bay, the fur traders in New France stepped up their efforts to control the northwestern trade through the Great Lakes routeway. In 1717 Zacharie Robutel de la Noue was sent to Lake Superior with eight canoes and orders from Governor General Philippe de Rigaud de Vaudreuil to establish posts at Kaministiquia (near present Thunder Bay), Lac la Pluie (Rainy Lake), and Lac des Assinibouels (Lake of the Woods) (Eccles 1984:4). La Noue may have explored beyond Lake Superior, but it appears that he built only one post at Kaministiquia. On the north shore of the lake, the French operated a post at the mouth of the Nipigon River and, farther east, an outpost at Michipicoten. From these bases on Lake Superior, the French were able to attract Indians to trade their furs locally instead of taking them to the HBC posts on the shores of Hudson and James Bay. The trade at Albany Fort was particularly hurt since its trading hinterland was within the sphere of French influence (Ray 1974:51). As early as 1716, Thomas McCliesh at Albany Fort referred to the French as "the treacherous next door neighbour we have to deal with" (Davies 1965:48). By the 1720s the volume of furs traded at Albany had decreased considerably because of French competition (Ray and Freeman 1978:177).

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[7] The HBC post at the mouth of the Nelson River had been destroyed in the winter of 1682/83 by a French party led by Radisson (Radisson and des Groseilliers had returned to France in 1678, and had received a full pardon). However, a year later Radisson rejoined the Hudson's Bay Company and succeeded in returning to the bay and seizing the French post.

In addition to the posts on Lake Superior, it appears that French traders were penetrating north and building outposts along some of the rivers leading to the bay. In May of 1713 Anthony Beale, the HBC trader at Albany Fort, met with a group of Indians who had come down the Albany River and reported that "they told me the french wood runners were planted at the head of this [Albany] River and Muce [Moose] River" (HBCA, B.3/a/4, fo. 31). These wood runners or coureurs de bois ranged beyond the official trading post network that was controlled by a system of licences or congés granted by the governor of New France. This clandestine trade was officially prohibited but hundreds of coureurs de bois were reported to be trading with Indians in the Upper Lakes country.

In 1730 the official French fur trade began to expand beyond Lake Superior. Under the aggressive leadership of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, sieur de la Vérendrye, posts were built at Rainy Lake in 1731 and Lake of the Woods in 1732. By the 1740s la Vérendrye had successfully established a string of trading posts that stretched to the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Rivers.

Much of the historical literature on this period has been concerned with the French penetration into the Great North. However, an active fur trade was conducted within the Little North while French discoveries were being made in the west. In addition to the trading posts already mentioned, a number of other small and ephemeral winter outposts were scattered throughout the Little North. Because of the dearth of written records concerning the activities of French traders and coureurs de bois, and the limited archaeological work that has been done in the region, it is impossible to ascertain their numbers or geographic range. James Sutherland, a HBC trader, came upon the remains of one such post in the fall of 1792 near his post at Escabitchewan (present Maynard Falls on the English River). An old Indian woman, judged by Sutherland to be about eighty years of age, recalled visiting the French post in her childhood. Upon further investigation Sutherland was informed that the trader's name was "Burdigno, or Burdino," and that he had operated the post about sixty years prior to 1792. This would date the structure at approximately 1730, about the time when the French began to push toward Rainy Lake and Lake of the Woods. Sutherland was keenly interested in the ruins, but lamented that all traces of them would soon be lost. In his journal he wrote:

> The corners of the House by which its dimentions may be known is still standing, but on the slightest touch moulders into dust. I carried a piece of one log home and tied it to the ledge of my House as a rare piece of antiquity in this wild Country where history is unpreserved (HBCA, B.64/a/1, fo. 12).[8]

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[8] Several other HBC journals mention the remains of old French houses. In 1777 John Kipling, master of Gloucester House, sent David Sanderson to explore up the Albany River to Eabamet Lake. Upon his

The encroachments of the French fur traders caused a significant decline in the fur returns of the Hudson's Bay Company, especially at Albany Fort. The total value of furs traded at Albany fell from 22,000 made beaver[9] in 1709 to less than 9,000 made beaver in 1743 (Ray and Freeman 1978:166). At Albany the cause of this dramatic decline was well known. On 9 May 1743, Chief Factor Joseph Isbister wrote that:

> I have had heare 30 Cannoes come downe this river [Albany River] but have not traded above one hundred Beaver skins with them all ye cause of this is we have got a new neighbour of 3 french pedlers come and placed themselves on ye maine branch of this river... all Indians that have come in here is all clothed with french cloth (HBCA, B.3/b/1, fo. 20).

The company attempted to counter the French by building a settlement inland from Albany Fort. Henley House, built in 1743 and situated 150 miles upstream near the confluence of the Albany and Kenogami Rivers, was still located within the resource-poor Hudson Bay Lowlands. However, this undertaking was an entirely new departure from the company's long established practice of tidewater trading, and considerable doubt was expressed about its efficacy and, indeed, its practicability.

Henley House was not intended to serve as an inland trading post, but to induce the upland Indians to bring their furs down to Albany and, at the same time, to keep a watch on the French traders. During the first year of its operation Henley House proved to be successful in encouraging Indians to travel to Albany. William Isbister was in charge of the post that season and he recorded the passage of Indians in 121 canoes down the river in the spring of 1743 (HBCA, B.86/a/1, fos. 22d-23d). They came mainly in small groups of three or four canoes, but several large flotillas were observed, including one that numbered twenty canoes. On one occasion Isbister noted the arrival of a "french Captain, he came down the river with his french flag flying" (HBCA, B.86/a/1, fo. 23d). Despite this encouraging beginning, Henley House proved to be a difficult post to manage. Men were reluctant to live at the post, and disputes erupted with Indians. There was also a constant threat of Indian or combined Indian and French attack.

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return he reported seeing the remains of "two Old French Houses" (HBCA, B.78/a/2, fo. 5d). Several years later James Sutherland visited Eabamet Lake "where the Old French House had been" (HBCA, B.78/a/11, fo. 5d). In 1786 John Best found "an old French house" on the south side of Lake St. Joseph (HBCA, B.155/a/1, fo.5). However, these may refer to post-1760 trading posts since HBC traders often referred to their Montreal opposition generally as the French.

[9] The term made beaver was used by the Hudson's Bay Company to signify the value in furs or goods equivalent to one prime beaver skin.

Consequently Henley was strongly fortified and a guard kept watch for surprise attacks. These precautions did not prevent the massacre of eight HBC men at Henley in the spring of 1755. Ironically, it was the so-called homeguard Indians who committed the murders and not the upland Indians or coureurs de bois (see Bishop 1976). Henley House was re-established in 1759, but within a few weeks a large party of Indians attacked the post, killing the manager and forcing the others to flee to Albany. This time it seems clear that the French, or Indians allied to the French, were responsible for the attack (Bishop 1976).

The competition between the Hudson's Bay Company and the traders from New France peaked in the early 1750s, but during the latter part of the decade the fur trade was of minor importance to the people of the St. Lawrence valley. British troops marched north from the American colonies and pressed in on the French settlements along the river. Trading posts in the west may have been abandoned as early as 1758 to provide support for the French colony (Wallace 1954:2). In 1760 British troops succeeded in capturing the principal towns, and New France fell into British hands. The French period in the fur trade was at an end, but a new trade from the St. Lawrence was about to begin.

Chapter II

THE MONTREAL PEDLARS, 1760-82

The French maintained an active trade in the Little North until the fall of New France in 1760. Although some French merchants continued in the fur trade thereafter, much of it was taken over by newly arrived British entrepreneurs. Based mainly in Montreal, these men provided the capital to finance new fur trade ventures. They recruited experienced French voyageurs and traders, but often placed British clerks in charge of their posts. The HBC men generally referred to these new rivals from Montreal as pedlars, a name they had also given to the earlier French traders. The term "pedlar" persisted in the early years after the British conquest when the northwestern fur trade was conducted by a handful of individuals or partnerships. Gradually, however, as the partnerships grew into larger companies, the term fell into disuse by the Hudson's Bay Company.

The fur traders from Montreal were quick to re-establish posts in the northwest after the fall of New France. In fact several traders reached Michilimackinac in 1761 prior to the arrival there of British troops (Henry 1901:49). The records of this period are scanty, but it appears that one trader got as far west as Rainy Lake in 1765, at which point his canoes were plundered by Indians (Wallace 1934:70-71). He made a second attempt the following year but met the same fate, again on Rainy Lake. Finally, in 1767, several traders were allowed past this blockade and reached Lake Winnipeg, while others penetrated beyond Lake Nipigon.

In the 1770s the St. Lawrence-based fur trade in the Little North came to be controlled by a Montreal trader named Ezekiel Solomon. Solomon was a Jewish entrepreneur who began his commercial activities in Albany, New York, in the 1750s. Born in Berlin, Germany, Solomon joined a partnership of four other Jewish merchants: Levy Solomon[10] (probably a cousin of Ezekiel), Chapman Abraham, Gershon Levy, and Benjamin Lyon (Katz 1948:247). Solomon and his partners established a business which supplied goods to British troops, and possibly furnished trade goods to fur traders operating out of Albany. However, the lives of Solomon and his partners took a dramatic turn when British troops succeeded in capturing the principal towns in New France. Sensing an opportunity for commercial success, they moved their operations to Montreal in 1760 and turned their attention to the fur trade. The British authorities had promised to open the trade to all, and Solomon and his partners were poised to take advantage of this opportunity.

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[10] According to Walter Dunn, the name was spelled Solomons (Dunn 1979:718). Most primary sources, including HBC documents, spell the name Solomon.

Solomon's actions were quick and decisive. In 1761 he took a load of trade goods to Michilimackinac to be among those traders who arrived there in advance of the British troops (the French forces had earlier deserted the garrison). In so doing he risked the property of his business and also his life. The Indians in the vicinity of Michilimackinac were still allied with the French, and demonstrated hostile intentions to Solomon and the handful of non-French traders who were at the fort until the British troops arrived. An uneasy peace continued until the summer of 1763 when the Indians, led by the Ottawa war chief Pontiac, rushed the fort and massacred most of the inhabitants. Among the few survivors was Ezekiel Solomon. Although he lost all of his goods, Solomon's life was spared when it was decided that he should be held for ransom. According to Alexander Henry the Elder, Solomon's captors took him to Montreal where a ransom was paid for his release (Henry 1901:103).

Solomon emerged from the ordeal of 1763 unscathed, but his business lay in ruins. In addition to Solomon's loss at Michilimackinac, three of the other partners were captured and their goods confiscated. Altogether they lost an estimated £18,000 during Pontiac's uprising (Dunn 1979:718). As a result, Solomon and his partners turned to British officials in Montreal to relieve them of their debts. In 1768 they drafted a bankruptcy petition, claiming they had lost a great quantity of goods in the summer of 1763. In their deposition they stressed their allegiance to the British crown and the role they had played in supplying British troops during the war with France. Evidently their petition was not without effect, for they quickly resumed their business ventures in the fur trade. One result, however, was the dissolution of their partnership. Each remained involved to some degree in the fur trade, but their subsequent careers took them in different directions.

After the breakup of the partnership, Ezekiel Solomon soon rose above the rest in terms of his prominence in the fur trade. Even before the bankruptcy proceedings were clarified Solomon resumed his fur trading activities. In 1766-67 he wintered at St. Anthony's Falls on the upper Mississippi trading with the Dakota Sioux (Armour 1967:77). By the 1770s, however, Solomon's activities settled into a more routine and less adventurous pattern. Most of his time was spent in Montreal, with a seasonal trip to Michilimackinac to make arrangements for the winter trading season (Halchin 1985:59).

In the early 1770s Solomon outfitted trading parties that ventured into the Great North. In 1773 his name appeared among others such as Benjamin Frobisher, Isaac Todd, and John McGill who sent canoes into that region. Joseph Hansom, a HBC employee who wintered near the site of Cumberland House, described the arrival of the "Canada Traders" in the fall of 1773. There were twenty canoes carrying five men each. Of these, three belonged to "Solomon a Jew in Montreal" who "has employed an old Canadian to go in with the canoes who has been upwards of these thirty years amongst the Indians" (Tyrrell 1934:241). The "old Canadian" may have been François Jérome dit Latour, also known as Franceway or Saswe, who was described by Matthew Cocking in 1773 as "an ignorant Frenchman, seemingly above sixty years of age" and "thirty years upon this business" (Wallace 1954:6). Solomon's activities in the Great North were shortlived, however, and by the mid-1770s he concentrated his efforts in the Little North.

In 1770 Solomon was granted a licence to trade beyond Michilimackinac, and from this date to 1783 his name became increasingly associated with the trade of Pays Plat and Nipigon, two points of rendezvous along the north shore of Lake Superior. Here inland traders met each summer with voyageurs from Montreal or Michilimackinac and exchanged packages of furs for bundles and barrels of trading goods. Montreal was the major source of trade goods and the destination of the furs, but Michilimackinac was a strategic point along the route to the northwest. It was here that trading licences had to be obtained and where provisions such as Indian corn, maple sugar, and grease were purchased from the nearby Indians. Thus, Solomon established business connections in both Montreal and Michilimackinac that were essential for success in the Little North.

In 1778 Solomon took on William Grant as a partner and a year later he made a business association with Alexander Shaw. Both were veteran fur traders (Halchin 1985:56). By the end of the decade it seems that Solomon and his partners had a controlling interest in the region north of Lake Superior. The register of fur trade engagements for the entire Canadian northwest shows that, in 1778, Solomon contracted with forty-seven men from various parishes around Montreal - all destined for posts in the Little North. The following year he engaged an additional forty men for his service, and was again the leading fur trade employer at Montreal. Thereafter Solomon's name appears less frequently, declining to a single contract in 1783 (Québec 1946-47:299-370).[11]

A more descriptive measure of Solomon's dominance in the Little North, and of overall fur trade activities in the region, can be gleaned from the writings of John Long. In 1791 Long published an account of eighteen years that he spent as an interpreter and fur trader in various parts of North America. The centrepiece of his book was a rather lengthy description of two years in which he was a trader among the Ojibwa in the Little North.

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[11] The register of fur trade engagements provides the names of men who contracted to work for various merchants who had licences to trade in the Northwest. The published register may contain some duplications and omissions. The length of the contract period is not given in the published register. For the years 1778 and 1779 only two names appeared under Solomon's contract in both years - suggesting that most men engaged for a period of more than one year, or that they quit Solomon's employ after one year. The following is an example of an engagement record: "1778, 9 mars. - Engagement de Raymond Labrosse au Sr Ezechiel Salomon pour aller au pays plat. - Etude [witness] A. Foucher" (Rapport de l'Archiviste de la Province de Québec 1946-47:304).

Long's narrative is important because it provides a rare glimpse into the fur trade of the Little North from the Canadian perspective. However, several incongruities in his account require clarification before it can be accepted as an accurate depiction. First, there is the problem of dating his actual time spent in the Little North. Long stated that he left Montreal on 4 May 1777, and terminated his employ at Michilimackinac in the spring of 1779. This is not consistent with dates of events that can be correlated with HBC sources. These sources indicate that his actual dates were 1778 to 1780, rather than 1777 to 1779. A second problem relates to the geographic orientation and distances of his travels in the Little North. In many instances Long was confused about the direction he was travelling and the distance covered between points. His actual route, however, can be reconstructed from the place names mentioned in the text. Finally, there is the problem of ascertaining Long's employer in this venture. Several HBC documents prove that his employer must have been Ezekiel Solomon. These documents clearly indicate that two traders mentioned by Long as belonging to the same company as himself were employees of Solomon during this period. The first was James Clark who was described by HBC trader George Sutherland in 1780 as being employed by "Ezekiel Solomon a kind of pedling merchant at Montreal" (HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo. 26d). The second was Jacques Santeron who wrote Long a letter explaining that "he was tired of being a servant, and thinking his labours not sufficiently rewarded, had determined to make a grand coup, having a number of fine packs which he proposed selling to the Hudson's Bay Company" (Long 1971:93). The HBC journals indicate that a Canadian trader named Germain Maugenest arrived at Albany Fort with a load of furs on 21 July 1779. The confusion in the names Santeron and Maugenest can be explained by the fact that Maugenest was also known by the names Saint-Auron or Saint-Terone (Rich 1954:364).

Although Long's recollection of certain dates and places was erroneous, it would be foolhardy to simply dismiss his account as a fabrication. There are too many facts that can only have come from someone who had been engaged in the fur trade in the Little North. A possibility exists that Long was able to gather second-hand strands of information from other people and weave their stories into his book. A second possibility is that Long exaggerated his role as a trader, and was in fact only a minor character who paid little attention to dates and places during his travels. In any case the Long account remains as an intriguing window on the fur trade of the Little North under Ezekiel Solomon during the late 1770s, and is worthy of a detailed investigation.

John Long's association with Solomon began in the spring of 1777 when he accepted an offer at Montreal to serve as an interpreter for a trading mision to the northwest country. He left Montreal with a party of two large canots de maître, and arrived at Michilimackinac in just under six weeks. Here the party exchanged its large canoes for smaller canots du nord and provisions were taken on for the rest of the journey.[12] They skirted the north shore of Lake Superior, stopping briefly at the flat country, or Pays Plat, and Nipigon Bay before proceeding through Lake Nipigon and into the Little North. Finally, six months after leaving Montreal, Long and his party arrived at their wintering grounds at "Lac la Mort." The location of Lac la Mort is unclear from Long's description of his route and the sketch map that accompanied his book (see fig. 2). He stated that the lake was situated to the northeast of Lake Nipigon, but other entries in his book indicate that it was actually northwest of Lake Nipigon. In order to reach Lac la Mort, Long travelled through Lac Eturgeon, or Sturgeon Lake. This was undoubtedly present Sturgeon Lake which is located about fifty miles west of Lake Nipigon (see fig. 3). From there it appears that Long and his men journeyed north and probably settled on present Savant Lake. This is the only lake in the vicinity that fits Long's description of Lac la Mort as being about sixty miles in circumference and surrounded by low, swampy land.

In mid-winter of 1777-78 the provisions at Lac la Mort ran short so Long decided to visit another trading post in the hope of receiving a supply of wild rice and dried meat. He set off for Lake Manontoye, or present Lake Minnitaki, where another of Solomon's traders wintered. The trader, Mr. Shaw, was probably Alexander Shaw who spent many years in the fur trade near Lake Nipigon. Long was guided by an Indian and his wife, and their route took them through Sturgeon Lake. As they drew near Lake Minnitaki they met a party of Indians who told them that Shaw was being threatened by a group of "Hudson's Bay Savages." These were probably Indians who had HBC trading connections, and not Indians who resided on Hudson Bay. Shaw's post was described by Long as "a fort, being secured by high pickets" (Long 1971:65), and it was surrounded by hostile and drunken Indians who spoke the "Chippeway" (Ojibwa) language. Long portrayed himself in this situation as the hero who rescued Shaw from certain death. This may be an exaggerated account of the actual events, but it points to the aggressive and sometimes hostile disposition of the Indians in their encounters with the fur traders who first penetrated the Little North and helps to explain why the first HBC inland posts were often fortified.

A few days after Long's return to Lac la Mort, several Indians arrived, some from the Red Lake or Misqui Sakiegan (present Red Lake), and some from the Weed Lake or Lake Shabeechevan (present Tide

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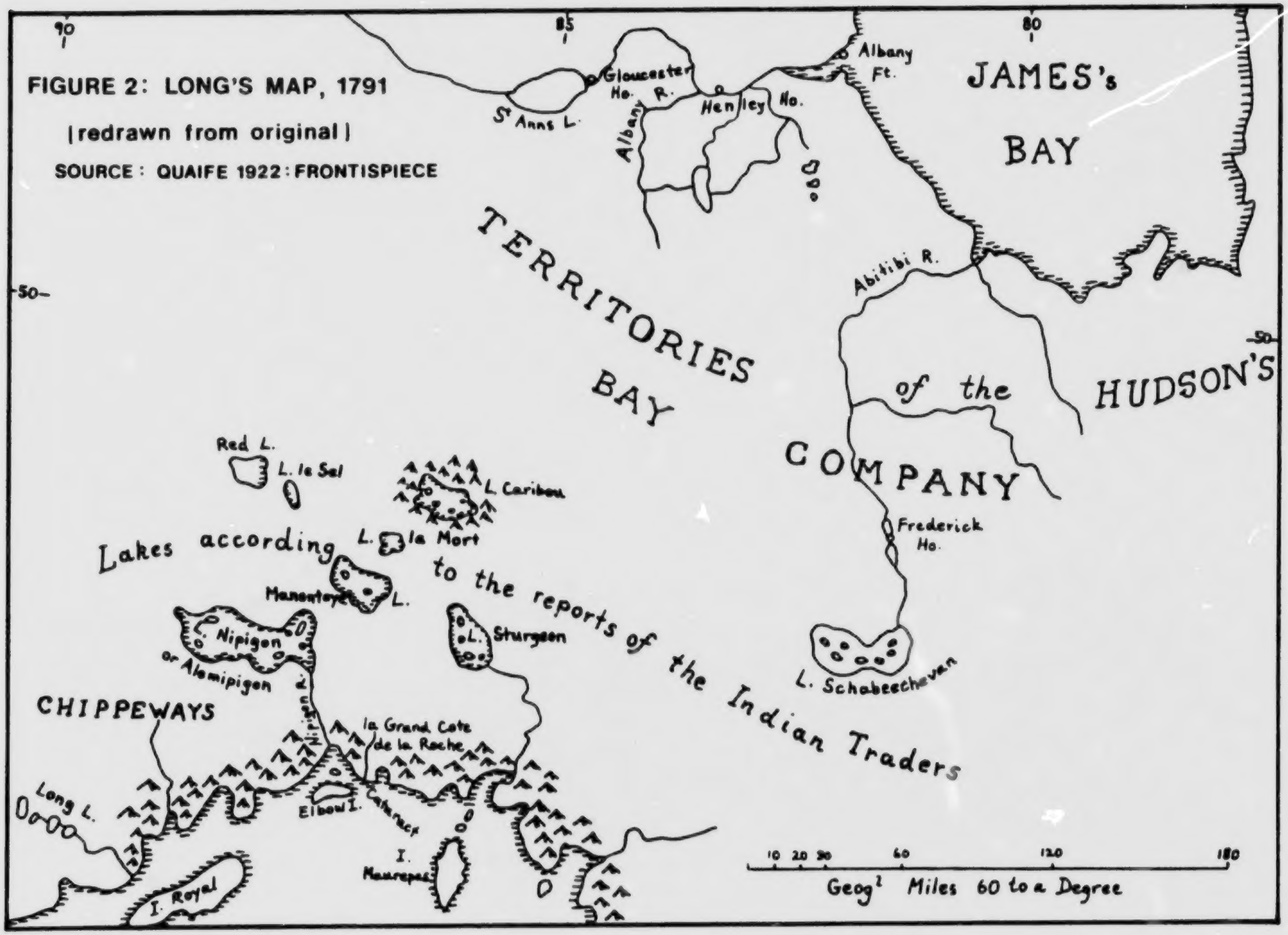
[12] Two general types of canoes were used in freighting furs and goods to and from Montreal. The larger, called the canot de maître, was employed between Montreal and the depots on Lake Superior. It was typically thirty-six feet long by six feet broad, and capable of holding about four tons of freight and eight to ten men. The smaller canot du nord was used north and west of Lake Superior. It was usually twenty-four feet long by four and one-half feet broad, and it could carry one and one-half tons of cargo and four or five men (Innis 1970:214,226).

FIGURE 2: LONG'S MAP, 1791

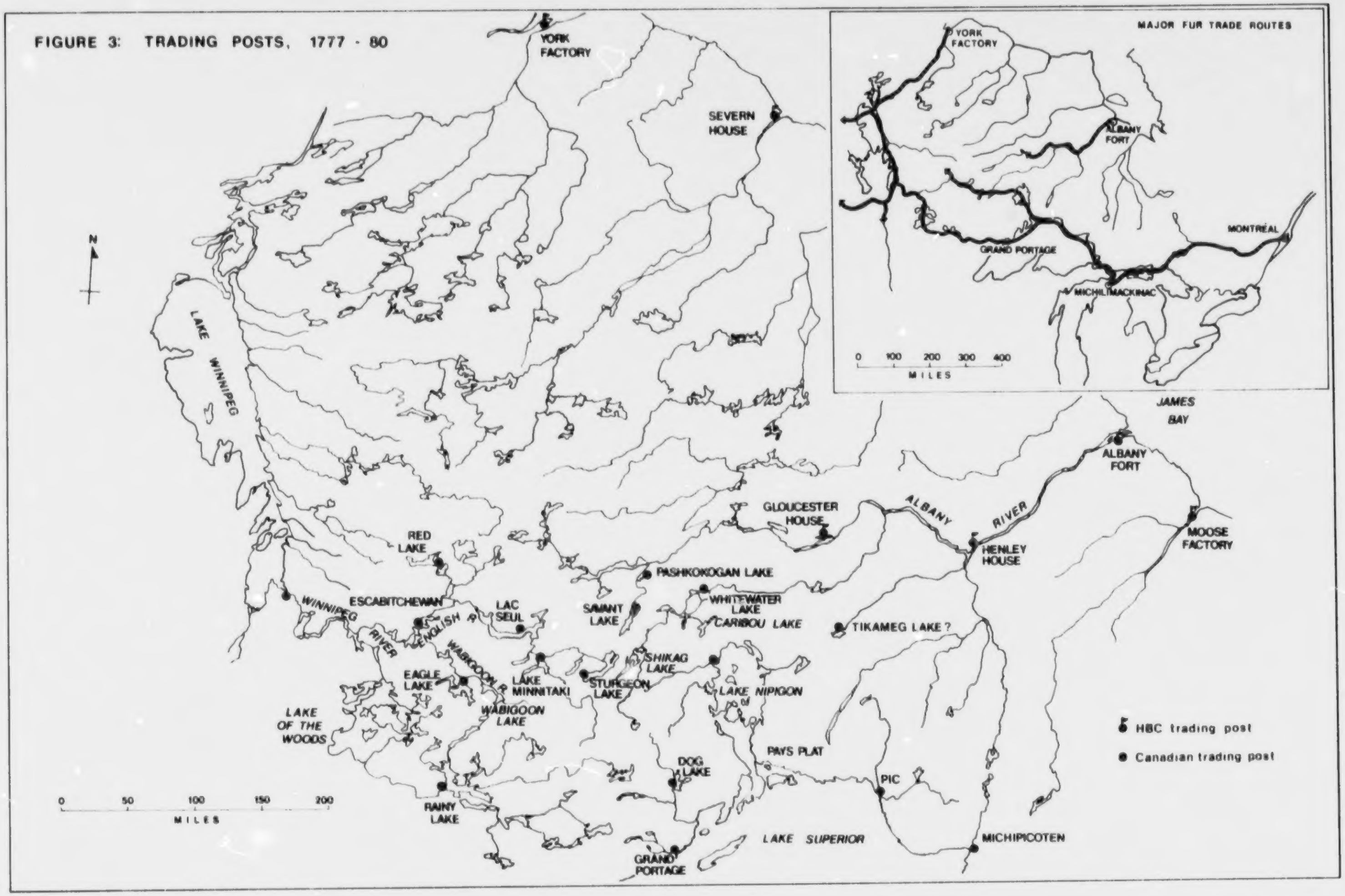
(redrawn from original)

SOURCE: QUAIFE 1922: FRONTISPIECE



90
85
80
50
50
JAMES's BAY
Albany Ft.
Gloucester Ho.
Albany R.
Henley Ho.
St Anns L.
TERRITORIES
BAY
HUDSON'S
of the
COMPANY
Abitibi R.
Frederick Ho.
L. Schabeechevan
Red L.
L. le Sel
L. Caribou
L. la Mort
Lakes according to the reports of the Indian Traders
Manontoye L.
L. Sturgeon
Nipigon or Alemipigon
Nipigon R.
CHIPPEWAYS
la Grand Cote de la Roche
Elbow I.
Cataract
I. Maurepas
Long L.
I. Royal
10 20 30 60 120 180
Geog^l Miles 60 to a Degree

FIGURE 3: TRADING POSTS, 1777 - 80


YORK FACTORY
SEVERN HOUSE
N
LAKE WINNIPEG
GLOUCESTER HOUSE
ALBANY RIVER
HENLEY HOUSE
ALBANY FORT
JAMES BAY
MOOSE FACTORY
RED LAKE
PASHKOKOGAN LAKE
WHITEWATER LAKE
CARIBOU LAKE
TIKAMEG LAKE ?
ESCABITCHEWAN
WINNIPEG RIVER
ENGLISH R
LAC SEUL
SAVANT LAKE
SHIKAG LAKE
LAKE NIPIGON
EAGLE LAKE
WABIGOON R
LAKE MINNITAKI
STURGEON LAKE
WABIGOON LAKE
LAKE OF THE WOODS
PAYS PLAT
PIC
DOG LAKE
RAINY LAKE
GRAND PORTAGE
LAKE SUPERIOR
MICHIPICOTEN
0 50 100 150 200
MILES
HBC trading post
Canadian trading post
MAJOR FUR TRADE ROUTES
YORK FACTORY
ALBANY FORT
MONTREAL
GRAND PORTAGE
MICHILIMACKINAC
0 100 200 300 400
MILES

Lake).[13] They gave him some measures of distance and direction to the principal lakes in the area:

> From Red Lake to Lake le Sel, or Salt Lake [Lac Seul] by the Indian accounts, there are fourteen short portages, and twenty two creeks.... From this lake [Lac Seul] to Lake Caribou, or Reindeer Lake, is eight days' march across five creeks and three portages (Long 1971:81).

The last-mentioned lake is undoubtedly present Caribou Lake, situated about twenty miles northwest of Lake Nipigon.[14] Long was also told that: "From Lake Schabeechevan [Tide Lake] to Lake Arbitibis are three small lakes, eight creeks, and five portages" (Long 1971:82). Lake Arbitibis probably referred to present Lake of the Woods. The lake was described as being:

> very large, and the surrounding land rocky and mountainous. At the northern extremity of this lake is a large fall of water, which flows from a river whose current is rapid for about twenty miles. On this river there are also dangerous rapids; the land upon its banks is low, and the beach sandy (ibid., p. 82).

Long's geographical description of the lake was based entirely on Indian accounts, and is obviously wrong in places. Downstream from Lake Arbitibis, or Lake of the Woods, Long mentioned a small lake or opening in the river called Crow's Nest Lake, or _Cark Cark Sakiegan_ (probably present Sand Lake). Thirty miles from Lake of the Woods was _Neeshshemaince Sakiegan_, or the Lake of the Two Sisters, so called from the "meeting of two currents, which form one grand discharge into the lake" (Long 1971:82). These observations match up with the previous interpretation of Lake Arbitibis as present Lake of the Woods. The location of the Lake of the Two Sisters corresponds to present Tetu Lake at the junction of the Winnipeg and English Rivers.

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[13] Red Lake is probably the present lake of the same name situated to the northwest of Lac Seul. Weed Lake, or Lake Shabeechevan, is present Tide Lake, where a number of trading posts commonly named Escabitchewan were built in later years by the HBC and other traders.

[14] Long described this lake as follows: "about thirty miles long, with several small islands, resembling the Mille Isles in the River St. Lawrence above Montreal. The water is deep and clear, and the bottom hard.... It is surrounded by a chain of high mountains. Some years ago a French trader settled here, but of late it has been deserted" (Long 1971:81-82). On Long's sketch map, Caribou Lake appears to the northeast of Lake Nipigon, and is depicted as surrounded by mountains. Present Caribou Lake is situated to the northwest of Lake Nipigon, but is bordered by hills and cliffs which reach 250 feet at some places.

During the latter part of the 1777-78 season, Long heard reports that one of Solomon's traders, James Clark, was in trouble at his post on "Lake Savan." Five of his men were reported starved to death. This information provides a clue to the identification of Lake Savan as present Pashkokogan Lake. George Sutherland, a HBC trader who wintered at Sturgeon Lake in 1779-80, wrote in his journal that "James Clark wintered at Pashcocoggan Lake in 1777 [1777-78], where 4 of his men died of hunger" (HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo. 19). Long also learned during the winter that another of Solomon's traders, Jacques Santeron (Germain Maugenest), had deserted to the Hudson's Bay Company. Santeron left his post at Lake Schabeechevan and took his furs to Albany Fort. The HBC records indicate that Santeron, or Germain Maugenest as he was known to the HBC men, arrived at Albany Fort on 21 July 1779 (one year later than Long's account), accompanied by his assistant Thomas Coates, seven Canadians, and three Indian guides (HBCA, B.3/a/75, fo. 25).

Long departed from Lac la Mort in the early summer of 1778 with a rich winter trade of 140 packs. He arrived at Portage Plain, adjoining Lake Nipigon, on 2 July 1778, and finally arrived at Pays Plat, east of the Nipigon River, on 10 August. There he met other traders, remarking that some of them had wintered remote from him and had gone inland by way of the Grand Portage at the west end of Lake Superior. On 15 August, Long was ready to leave for his second trading season in the Nipigon Country.

His destination that year was Lake Schabeechevan, or Escabitchewan, where the deserter Jacques Santeron was said to have wintered the previous year. Since he did not mention Sturgeon Lake or Lake Manontoye in his account, one can assume that his route to Lake Schabeechevan was not by the Lac Seul-English River route. The alternative route would have been via the Wabigoon River system. It appears that Long left the English River track just before entering Sturgeon Lake, and then travelled through a series of lakes and rivers until he reached Skunk's Lake (present Wabigoon Lake). From there, he travelled to Lake Schabeechevan which he described as:

> about 180 miles in circumference and full of small islands. It abounds with fish, and the swamps are full of wild rice and cranberries. It is about six days' march from Lac la Mort.... At the extremity of this lake is a fall of water which runs from a river of the same name, and has a direct communication with the waters leading from Fort Albany (Long 1971:108).

These observations correctly describe the geographical characteristics of present Tide Lake, except for an overestimation of its circumference.

During the winter, Long was informed that Joseph La Forme, another of Solomon's traders who was settled at Lac Seul, was killed by an Indian. He also mentioned a trading post under the management of a Mr. Fulton on Skunk's Head Lake, or Shekarkistergoan (present Shikag

Lake), located between Lake Nipigon and Minnitaki Lake. In February of 1779, Long was visited by a trader claiming to have come from Fort Albany. He was "dressed in a smoaked-leather shirt," and was described by Long as a respectable and civil man (ibid., p.125). The only man to visit this part of the country from Albany was George Sutherland. However, Sutherland did not mention this meeting with Long in his journal so that the veracity of Long's account in this instance is questionable. Long may have learned of an inland traveller to this area at a later date and decided to include a meeting with him in his book to provide additional interest to his story. In any case, it is unlikely that a meeting with Sutherland took place.

Long's return in the spring followed the Skunk's River and, if the interpretation of Skunk's Lake as present Wabigoon Lake is correct, then the Skunk's River would correspond to the Wabigoon River. The party finally reached Pays Plat where they met with some men who had brought out supplies for the next winter's trade in return for the furs. Long's contract had expired and he decided to return to Michilimackinac. After giving an account of his "stewardship" to his employers (presumably Solomon and William Grant), he retired from the trade of the Little North.

Long's narrative of the Little North reveals many things about the organization of Solomon's trading operations, and the way in which the trade was conducted with the Indians. First, there is basic information about the location of trading posts in the region. This information, along with data in HBC documents, indicates that the Canadians were spread over a substantial portion of the Little North (see fig. 3). In fact, George Sutherland, who spent the winter of 1779-80 with some of Solomon's men at Sturgeon Lake, lamented that "the country northward of Lake Superior is poisoned with them for it is impossible for a man to travel 150 miles any course without finding a pedlars house" (HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo. 26d).

The manner in which Solomon's men conducted their trade with the Indians is depicted in both Long's account and HBC documents. For example, Long's first meeting with Indians at Lac la Mort involved a formal gift exchange. Kesconeek, the chief of a large band of Chippeways (Ojibwa), gave presents that included skins, dried meat, fish and wild rice. For his part, Long reciprocated by giving to the band two kegs of watered rum, five carrots (large cigar-shaped packets) of tobacco, fifty scalping knives, gun flints, powder, shot, ball, and various trinkets. He also presented special gifts to eight individuals who were recognized as chiefs. These men each received a north-west gun, calico shirt, scalping knife, and extra ammunition (Long 1971:56). During the winter smaller groups of Indians came in with various quantities of furs and provisions. In the spring, a large gathering of about 600 Indians, according to Long's estimate, met at the post with the rest of their winter and spring hunts.

George Sutherland, the HBC man from Albany Fort, also commented on this subject in his journal during the winter of 1779-80 which he spent alongside one of Solomon's traders, James Clark. Sutherland was impressed by the quality and quantity of the trade goods in Clark's possession, and was astonished to find out how much was given free to the Indians in the fall to induce them to trade in the winter and spring. The goods given as presents included rum, powder, shot, tobacco, looking glasses, paint, knives, beads, ribbons, flints, steels, combs, awls, needles, gun worms, rings, earrings, bracelets, arm beads, hair plates, ruffled shirts, and tobacco boxes. The remainder of the goods were traded at different rates depending on whether there was a competing trader in the vicinity.

Table 1 summarizes Clark's standard of trade under these circumstances and compares them with the HBC standard. Considering the distance that the Canadians had to travel, George Sutherland believed that Solomon's prices were incredibly low, and wondered how a profit could be realized. Solomon paid his clerks a handsome salary amounting to 2,000 or 3,000 livres (roughly 85 to 130 pounds sterling) per year (compared with Sutherland's wage of ten pounds per year), and sometimes one-fifth share of the profits of their posts. In addition, they were provided with food and clothing at no extra expense. The common men were paid between 1,000 and 1,500 livres, but were often in debt to Solomon because they were forced to buy supplies such as food and clothing from his store (see tables 2 and 3). Sutherland noted that it was " by these extravagent prices for the necessaries of life the poor men are soon paid their wages, and often indebted a year or two service besides" (HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo. 29d). This arrangement undoubtedly lowered Solomon's overhead costs and enabled him to trade with the Indians at very competitive prices.

Having had the opportunity to view Clark's trading goods, Sutherland assessed the HBC wares as being as good or better. During the trading season, he was also able to calculate the Canadian standard of trade in terms of the HBC made beaver standard. This is shown in Table 4 along with the company's standard at Albany Fort for the same season. The main difference in the two standards of trade involved the value of cat, or lynx, pelts. Beaver, marten, otter, and lynx pelts were the main species in the trade of the Little North at this time, making up about ninety percent of the total (HBCA, B.3/d/87, fo. 22). Since the Indians could get more for their lynx pelts from the Hudson's Bay Company, the Canadians encouraged their Indians to trade lynx for otter pelts with the HBC Indians, and thereby profited from the higher market value for otter pelts. They had also realized that they could profit by maintaining a flexible standard of trade and thereby take advantage of the more rigid standards of the HBC. The HBC standards reflected many years of trading with Indians at a relatively fixed standard which became increasingly difficult to change (Ray 1978:63).

The relationship between Indians and traders, and between Indian groups during the 1770s was characterized by frequent outbreaks of violence. Much of this violence occurred when large amounts of liquor were being distributed to the Indians. During the first winter that Long spent in the Little North he recorded seven separate

TABLE 1

Clark's Standard of Trade, 1779

Item	Quantity	Standard Under Competition	Standard When Alone	HBC Standard
blanket	1	3 MB*	7 MB*	6 MB*
gun	1	8 "	12 "	12 " †
coat	1	4 "	5 "	-- +
kettle, 3 gal.	1	2 "	5 " (2 gl)	1 MB
stockings, pr.	1	1 "	2 "	1 1/4 MB
hatchet	1	1 "	2 "	1 MB
flour, lb.	1	free	2 "	--
powder, lb.	1	"	1 "	1 MB
shot, lb.	2	"	1 "	1/2 MB
ball	20	"	1 "	--
gartering, yd.	1	"	1 "	1 MB
tobacco, fm. [fathom]	1	"	1 "	--
looking glass and comb	1	"	1 "	1 MB

* Made Beaver - exchange rate for one large beaver skin
† Standard of trade for one gun four feet in length
+ Information not available in the HBC account books.

Sources: HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo. 29d; B.3/d/86, fo. 22.

liquor-related incidents of violence in which twenty-two people were killed and ten injured.

Aside from these outbreaks of violence which usually involved family members in domestic disputes, one incident recorded by Long had a more deliberate character. This event occurred during his second summer at Lake Nipigon and involved a group of Ojibwa and the so-called nation of the Wasses.[15] The Wasses were described by Long as

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[15] Long's description of the Indians known as the nation of the Wasses is similar to HBC accounts of the Wauseewuc Indians who lived near Lake Nipigon. The identification of this particular group of Indians is difficult given the changing terminology employed by non-native observers in the seventeenth century. The name Wasses, or Wauseewuc, is similar to Ouasouarini, or Awausé, an Algonquian-speaking group who lived near Georgian Bay in the

TABLE 2

Prices of Various Goods Sold to Clark's Men, 1779

Item	Quantity	Price
pork, lb.	1	10 livres
flour, lb.	1	10 "
rum, qt.	1	40 "
sugar, lb.	1	10 "
tobacco, lb.	1	50 "
callico shirt	1	20 "
jacket	1	50 "
trousers	1	20 "
blanket	1	100 "
cloth	1	120 "

Source: HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo. 24d.

"a select people that seldom associate with other tribes" and were always at war with the neighbouring Ojibwa (Long 1971:97). During this encounter eighteen Wasses were ambushed and killed by the Nipigon Indians. The HBC records also document this particular incident in some detail. The first warning came in the summer of 1777, when Indians at Henley House reported that the "Wauseewuc" Indians had killed a number of Indians in the upland country (HBCA, B.86/a/31, fo. 5). This was followed by numerous reports the following summer of the ambush on Lake Nipigon. According to the information received at Albany, the Wauseewuc Indians had killed ten more Indians at Lake Nipigon (HBCA, B.3/b/16, fo. 5).

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mid-seventeenth century (Thwaites 1959, vol. 18:229). The Awausé appear to have moved westward along with the Nipissing and other Algonquian groups following the Iroquois invasions of the 1650s. In 1739 Joseph La France identified the Indians living northwest of Michipicoten as the "Ouassi Nation." He described these Indians as "a tribe of the Sauteur [Ojibwa]" (Dobbs 1744:32). It seems logical to identify Long's nation of the Wasses with La France's Ouassi Nation. Whether these people can be traced to the Ouasouarini nation on Georgian Bay in 1640 is a matter of greater speculation. In any case the seventeenth and eighteenth century evidence illustrates the complex nature of Indian group names among the Ojibwa.

TABLE 3

Summary of Food Provided to James Clark and his Men, 1779

James Clark:	
400	lb. flour
8	gal. keg fat beef (no bones)
8	gal. keg fat pork
8	gal. keg deer fat
(2) 8	gal. kegs maple sugar
25	lb. chocolate
6	lb. tea
50	lb. barley
8	gal. keg butter
Clark's men:	
40	bushels Indian corn
(3) 8	gal. kegs deer fat
	plus as many fish as they can catch

Source: HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo. 33.

These particular incidents point to a pattern of inter-group hostility that can be discerned from many HBC documents.[16] Some evidence suggests that this pattern may have been a long-standing one in the Little North. For example, the Indians who accompanied George Sutherland on a trip to Lake Winnipeg in 1777 told him that "ther was formerly a great many Indians in Albany River but destroyed being always at ware with one another" (HBCA, B.3/a/73, fo. 11). This may be an allusion to the warfare between the Ojibwa and Dakota Sioux

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[16] Edward Rogers and Mary Black-Rogers have studied the pattern of hostility between the Cranes (a group of Northern Ojibwa living north of Lake St. Joseph in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) and their neighbours. Their research has pointed to various causes for hostility, including territorial aggression, witchcraft, and trouble arising from disputes over women (Rogers and Black-Rogers 1983).

TABLE 4

George Sutherland's Comparison of James Clark's and the HBC Standards of Trade, 1779

Canadian Standard		HBC Standard	
1 otter	= 1 MB	1 otter	= 1 MB
1 cat (lynx)	= 1 MB	1 cat	= 2 MB
2 marten	= 1 MB	2 marten	= 1 MB
2 mink	= 1 MB	4 mink	= 1 MB
1 wolverine	= 1 MB	1 wolverine	= 2 MB
1 wejack (fisher)	= 1 MB	1 wejack	= 1 MB

Source: HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo. 33d.

south of Lake of the Woods, but it seems likely that some warfare between groups in the Little North was also deep-rooted. This view was imparted to John McNab, the HBC trader at Henley House, who was told by an Indian woman in 1784 that in her youth she had lived on Lake Nipigon, but she was afraid to go back because of hostile Indians. McNab further noted that this fear was "almost general among the Natives up the South River (Kenogami River)" (HBCA, B.86/a/37, fo. 19).

Long's account also provides a vital and singular insight into the geography of the early Canadian trade in the Little North. It is evident that Solomon's trading network was concentrated in the area between Lake Nipigon and Escabitchewan, and the Canadian traders approached this region through Lake Nipigon. Their point of departure from Lake Nipigon was Wabinosh Bay at the northwest extremity of the lake and, from there, the traders diverged along different "paths" for their respective winter stations.

The distribution of trading posts and routeways described by Long indicates that the trading ventures of the Canadians had taken them deep into areas that had for years supplied furs to the Hudson's Bay Company through Severn House and, more especially, Albany Fort. Their inroads were such that the company could no longer be sure of a regular or adequate supply of furs from the upland Indians of the forested interior. The Canadian traders saw the Little North as a valuable fur domain into which further expansion was possible, and from which greater profit could be derived. The HBC men knew it only as a vaguely defined hinterland which for a century had yielded its wealth each spring to the bayside forts employing the old system of tidewater trading, a system which the English were loathe to give up.

Chapter III

HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY INLAND EXPANSION FROM ALBANY FORT, 1760-82

In 1766 the Hudson's Bay Company decided to re-establish Henley House to check the encroachments of the pedlars. However, Henley House was still intended only to induce the Indians to take their furs down to Albany Fort, and not as a trading post in its own right. Albany's chief officer, Humphrey Marten, clearly outlined this function in a letter to Thomas Powell, master at Henley House, on 12 September 1769:

> When the Honble Committee, ordered Henley to be re'established, it was not with the intent to make it a place of Trade, but as a place, where the Natives on being distressed, in their Passage to and from Albany Fort, both in summer, and winter, might resort to, and receive such helps, as their necessitys require (HBCA, B.3/b/7, fos. 2-2d).

Powell responded that he was perplexed by these orders since he believed that the company was losing a great deal by not allowing Indians to trade at the house (HBCA, B.3/b/7, fo. 10). Many Indians informed Powell that they would take their furs to the pedlars if he did not trade with them. Marten held steadfastly to a contrary view and wrote that:

> let me tell you that the Indians will come to this place [Albany], except when the following accidents happen, viz., sickness, lameness, a small quantity of goods, or such summer trash [summer furs], that it is not worth taking from them or lastly if not inticed by the master to trade at Henley or suffered so to do Privately with the men (HBCA, B.3/b/7, fo. 11d).

The general tone of Marten's words downplayed the effects of the pedlars upon Albany's returns, and put some of the blame on the men at Henley House. Three months later, however, Marten reversed his position and urged his men:

> not to be too sparing in a few presents to Uplanders [Indians from Albany's interior]. If we sow not how shall we reape.... So many Pedlars up Country settling themselves in Every corner must distress us much, he therefore that can counteract those Encroaching Rascals will do himself Honours, and his Master acceptable service (HBCA, B.3/b/7, fo. 21d).

During the early 1770s reports of the pedlars among Albany's upland Indians steadily increased. The Canadians were building posts amidst the Indians' winter hunting grounds and giving their leaders large presents to discourage them from going to Albany Fort. Similar inland activities were reported from York and Severn, but the greatest impact was felt at Albany. Marten became so distressed that in 1772, he wrote: "Poor Albany how art thou fallen, the trade at Present, not 5000 [made beaver] the Pedlars ruin us, may the Devil confound them" (HBCA, B.3/b/9, fo. 3d). In 1775, Henley House was elevated to the status of trading post and, with this change in policy, the era of inland trading from Albany began.

Although Albany had made the first move inland by establishing Henley House, the exploration of the forested uplands of the Little North was initiated from Severn House. In 1767, Andrew Graham, the master at Severn, sent William Tomison to winter among Severn's upland Indians. Tomison ascended the Severn River to the height of land and then crossed into the East Winnipeg country to record the first written account of this region and of the Canadian trade that was developing in its vicinity. His most probable route to Lake Winnipeg or the "great lake" was down the Poplar River, a route that was used by later inland travellers from Severn (fig. 4). After nearly three months of travelling Tomison arrived at Lake Winnipeg:

> arrived at the great Lake on Sept 3d where I found many Indians waiting the arrival of the English and french pedlars, they informed me that there were two Houses at Misquagamaw River[17] within 1/2 days padle acrose the Lake, and that they were gone down with furs to Montreal; one House is commanded by an Englishman and 8 servants who mans two Large canoes, the other house by a frenchman and 16 servants who mans 4 Large canoes and to the westward were 3 houses more all commanded by frenchmen, they take all kinds of furs, the natives were cloathed in french cloth, blankets, printed callicoes and other stuffs (HBCA, B.198/a/10, fos. 1-1d).

Tomison later told Graham that the French trader was named "Paquatick," and the Englishman was called "Wapestan" (HBCA, B.198/a/9, fo. 36, 36d). Paquatick was an experienced trader who had spent many years "above Albany River," while Wapestan was a young man and unfamiliar with the Indian language.

In October 1767 Tomison met a French trader and his entourage of ten Frenchmen and fourteen Indians in six large canoes on their way to Basquea (Paskoyac or The Pas). The French trader's name was Saswe:[18]

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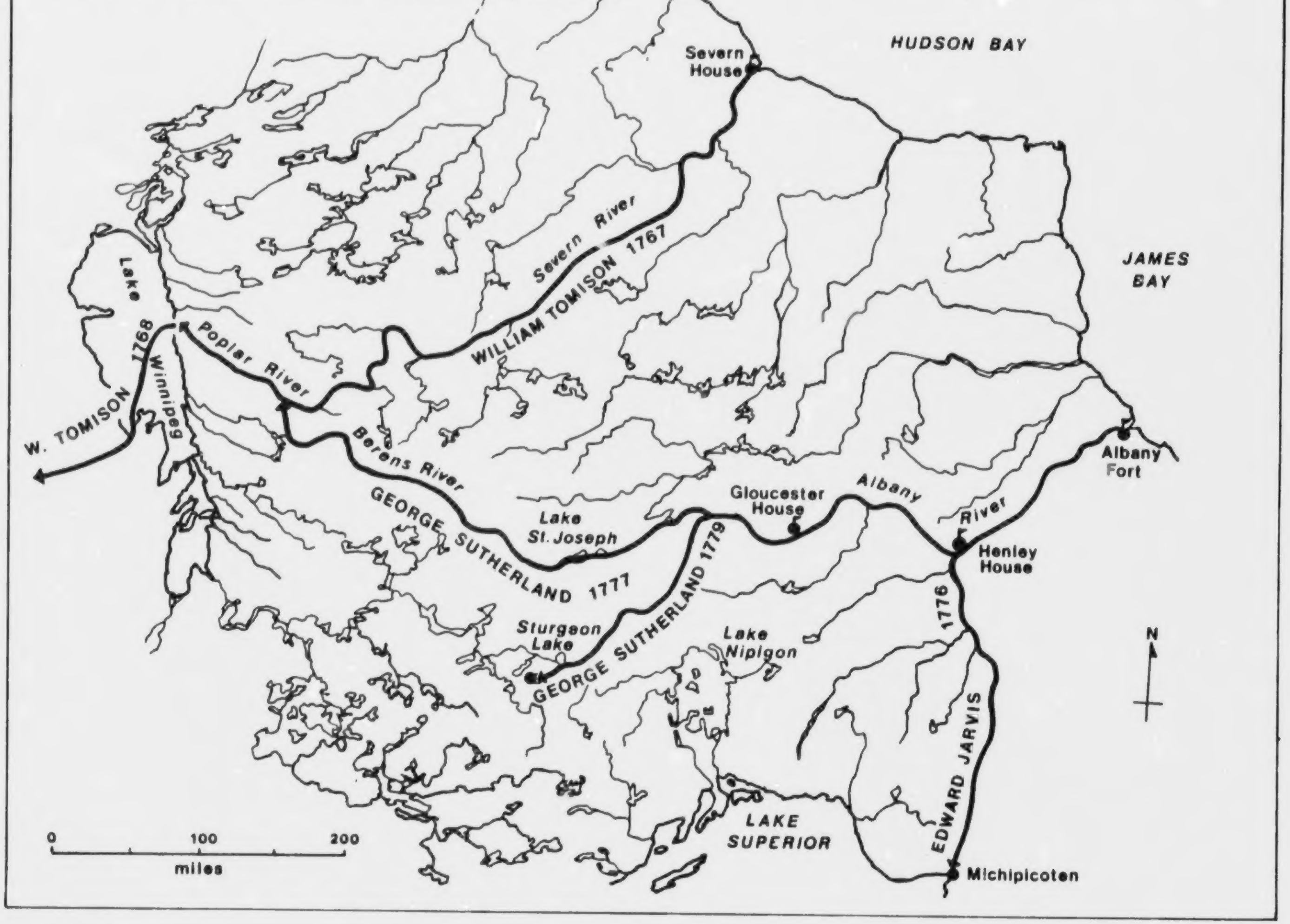
[17] The Misquagamaw River is most likely the Red River, which enters Lake Winnipeg from the south.

[18] Saswe was the nickname of François Jérôme dit Latour. He was also known by the names Franceway or François (Ray 1979:365).

FIGURE 4: HBC INLAND EXPLORATIONS, 1767-79


HUDSON BAY
Severn House
JAMES BAY
Severn River
WILLIAM TOMISON 1767
Lake
1768
Winnipeg
W. TOMISON
Poplar River
Berens River
Albany Fort
Gloucester House
Albany
River
Henley House
Lake St. Joseph
GEORGE SUTHERLAND 1777
GEORGE SUTHERLAND 1779
Sturgeon Lake
Lake Nipigon
1776
EDWARD JARVIS
N
LAKE SUPERIOR
Michipicoten
0
100
200
miles

> His dress was a ruffled shirt, a Blanket Jacket, a pair of long trowsers without stockings or shoes his own hair with a hatt bound about with green binding, a poor looking small man about 50 years of age, he seemed to have a great command over the men, he lay in the middle of the canoe with his wife and son (HBCA, B.198/a/10, fo. 2d).

Tomison also learned from one of Saswe's men that he was employed and outfitted by a French merchant from Montreal. Paquatick and Wapestan were expected to return to Red River that fall, and two other traders had gone toward Basquea. No posts were established on the east coast of Lake Winnipeg, but there was evidently an informal trade at certain river mouth rendezvous during the spring and fall.

Tomison returned to Severn in the summer of 1768 and spent the next winter preparing another inland expedition which commenced in the summer of 1769. This second journey took him past Lake Winnipeg to the Lake Dauphin area (fig. 4). Tomison observed much the same patterns as he had two years previously; the Canadian traders were well established in the Dauphin region and profiting at HBC expense. He returned to Severn by way of York Fort and later became one of the company's leading traders along the Saskatchewan River.

Despite Tomison's observations on Canadian encroachments no further plans were made at Severn to establish inland trading posts. As the Hudson's Bay Company remained content to sit on the bayside, Canadian traders expanded their operations to reach the headwaters of the Severn River by 1771.[19] The trade at Severn declined and, by 1772, only the "low country natives," or the home guard Indians who inhabited the Hudson Bay lowlands, were trading at the house. The Severn home guard were Cree-speaking Indians who were also known as "Muskekowuck," a Cree word that denoted the lowland marsh environment in which they lived (Isham 1949:112; Graham 1969:206). Those who lived in the upland forests were clearly differentiated from the homeguard, and were known to the HBC traders at Severn as _Bungee_. The term Bungee was used as a general name to describe the Northern Ojibwa who lived near the headwaters of the Severn River.[20] In the 1770s Canadian posts established near the Severn headwaters caused most of the Bungee to discontinue their annual trading voyages to the bay.

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[19] Christopher Atkinson, master at Severn House, reported in the spring of 1772 that Canadians were "lying at the head of the Severn River" (HBCA, B.198/a/15, fo. 35d).

[20] George Barnston, HBC chief trader at Martin's Fall in 1839, wrote that the term Bungee was "a name, I imagine, given to them from their use of the Sauteux word Pungee-a little" (HBCA, B.123/e/14, fo. 4). See also David Pentland 1981:241. For further information on the Ojibwa of the Upper Severn see Rogers 1983; Rogers and Black-Rogers 1982; and Bishop 1974. Although the Rogers and Bishop differ in opinion regarding the protohistorical location of these people, they provide much valuable information relating to Ojibwa culture.

The slowness of the Severn traders to establish inland trading posts was caused partly by the company's reluctance to officially sanction such a move. Another reason hinted at in many Severn House journals was the unwillingness or inability of the men at the post to perform such duties. John Ballenden, master at Severn House, wrote the following in a letter outlining the prospects of inland trading posts in 1796:

> I am certain was a settlement established inland from this place it would in my humble opinion be advantageous to our Honble. Employers, the few men I have at Severn, hardly above three or four are fit for such an undertaking, my Honble. Employers has never signified their wishes for me to try notwithstanding I have several times acquainted them (HBCA, B.3/b/33, fo. 34).

In the late 1760s and early 1770s it was apparent that Canadian traders were increasing in numbers in the Little North and expanding their range. HBC reports from that period indicated that Canadians had extablished posts near the headwaters of the Albany and Severn Rivers. These reports were based upon Indian information and difficult to verify, but they nonetheless suggest that Canadian traders had successfully penetrated into the interior of the Little North. One such individual was "Monsieur Clause" whose journey northwest of Lake Nipigon in 1767 was recounted by North West Company trader Duncan Cameron in 1804. Clause and his companions were said to have been the first traders to winter beyond Lake Nipigon after the British conquest of New France. Their venture proved difficult, however, and Cameron noted that Clause and his men "were almost starved to death and reduced to eat several packs of beaver to preserve their lives" (Masson 1960, vol. 2:242-243).

News of pedlar activity reached the HBC traders at Henley and Albany with increasing frequency in the late 1760s. On 30 September 1766, an Indian named Captain Mekiss told Henley's trader William Richards, "there is no less than three English and french settlements within seven days journey of this place" (HBCA, B.86/a/13, fo.7). A year later two Indian captains named Peckican and Nonose-cash confirmed that there were "three huts of French traders on the North [Albany] River" (HBCA, B.86/a/14, fo. 6).

By 1776, declining fur returns and the injurious effects of Solomon's trading made it essential for Albany Fort to supplement its tidewater trade. The times also seemed auspicious, for the company hoped to take advantage of the American War of Independence which threatened to make vulnerable the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes routeway. In the summer of 1776, Thomas Hutchins, the chief factor of Albany, sent Edward Jarvis inland to survey the situation. Jarvis returned later that year having been as far as Lake Superior. He had gone by the Albany River's south branch (Kenogami River), and had visited two Canadian trading posts at Meshipicoot (Michipicoten) (fig. 4). On the basis of his observations, the Albany council determined that the Lake Superior region could be better exploited from Moose Fort than from Albany because of easier access through the Moose River basin. As a result, future inland initiatives from Albany were to be directed along the main branch of the Albany River.

Hutchins also solicited information about the inland country from the Indians who visited Albany Fort. They told him unanimously that Canadian traders intercepted most of the Indians and their furs before they could reach Henley House. One upland Indian woman gave Hutchins a detailed description of the geography of the Little North, and presumably drew a map showing the main lakes and rivers (HBCA, B.3/b/14, fo. 8d; the map has not survived). She identified a trading post at "Rainy Lake" (or Lake le Pluye), managed by "Francois and Michael Bouy two old traders" (ibid., fo. 9). The Indian woman described the area near Rainy Lake and Lake of the Woods as a "bountiful country," and Hutchins determined to eventually establish posts on those lakes.

On 28 May 1777 Hutchins sent John Kipling and David Sanderson inland from Albany Fort to establish a trading post beyond Henley House. Kipling was in charge of the venture and he was instructed to build a "temporary House, with a pitched roof in the manner of the Canadians" (HBCA, B.3/b/14, fo. 20). He was also given orders to procure large birchbark canoes from the Indians "such as the Canadians use, about 40 feet long and 4 broad" (ibid., fo. 20). Hutchins firmly believed that it was necessary to adopt Canadian practices of inland travelling and living if the Hudson's Bay Company was to be successful.

Kipling and Sanderson travelled with an Indian woman who had agreed to guide them to a suitable wintering place. At Henley House they took on six more HBC men and arranged to be escorted by seven Indian families who were returning upriver. The party left Henley in canoes on 8 June 1777 and reached Upasheway Lake (present Washi Lake) seventeen days later. They gave the name Gloucester to the lake and trading post in honour of the brother of King George III. The hastily built post was located on the south shore of the lake (a more permanent post was built the following year on the north shore). Kipling and his men were novices at wilderness living, but the Indians who accompanied them from Henley remained nearby during summer and supplied the post with provisions such as dried sturgeon and venison. As winter approached, however, the Indians expressed a desire to move elsewhere and warned Kipling to return to Henley or face starvation. The leader, named Captain Jacob by the HBC men, told Kipling bluntly that he and his men would starve to death if they remained at Gloucester (HBCA, B.78/a/3, fo. 7d). Kipling realized the truth of Jacob's words since his men had been unable to lay up a stock of winter provisions, so he returned to Henley on 10 December 1777. The first venture into the Canadian Shield had demonstrated that the HBC men needed to learn much more about living in the boreal forest environment if they were to compete with the pedlars from Montreal.

Perhaps Hutchins had a premonition of Gloucester's failure when he decided to send George Sutherland on an exploration of the country far beyond Upasheway Lake. Sutherland had been previously employed as Hutchins's personal servant, but he had also demonstrated an ability to withstand the rigours of inland travelling in several exploratory trips north of Albany Fort. He was not to travel alone; rather he was to accompany a group of Indians led by an "Upland Captain" named Caupermertissnewinnekee. This Indian was respected by Hutchins, and had seasonally brought his furs down to Albany from a great distance inland. Hutchins trusted Caupermertissnewinnekee to take Sutherland into his country and to return the following summer. Sutherland was to record the events of his journey, taking note of any pedlar activity, and induce more Indians to trade with the HBC.

Sutherland set out from Albany on 20 June 1777 and, after passing Gloucester House, came to Memenescua sacaheggan (present Miminiska Lake) where he met an encampment of Indians. Sutherland noted that he knew these were "french Indians" by their style of dress (HBCA, B.3/a/73, fo. 4). Inside their tent, Sutherland was surprised to discover an Englishman who upon further investigation was found to be a servant of a "Mr. Bartie" who had a trading post about ninety miles to the southwest (probably on Pashkokogan Lake). Bartie had taken his cargo of furs (amounting to 1200 made beaver) to Michilimackinac, while his servant spent the summer with an Indian family. The trader in question may have been Jean-Baptiste Barthe, an associate of Jean-Baptiste Cadot and John Askin who were prominent traders at Michilimackinac at the time (Armour 1983:129).

At the end of July 1777 Sutherland's party had made their way to the "Lakes Country," described by Sutherland as "nothing but high Rocks and small woods - such as pine, fir, poplar, junaper, Burtch, spruce, and a few ash trees" (HBCA, B.3/a/73, fo. 8d). He was likely at the headwaters of the Albany River, heading westward toward Lake Winnipeg. The Indians appeared to be in no hurry to reach their wintering ground, and spent the next two months hunting and fishing as they moved slowly westward. In September they stopped to gather wild rice, a plant that intrigued Sutherland with its potential as a food for inland settlements. He described it as:

> a kind of Indian Corn [traders sometimes referred to wild rice as corn] or more properly wild Rice, it grows in the water - the grain Resemble Oats but something longer and smaler and of a greenish cullor - the stauke is full as large as the stauke of wheat and about five feet long - three of which is below water and about two above, there are many Rivers and Lakes that contain this Grain - and is Ripe about the middle of August and if the Indians be not there at that time they find but little as the first Gale of wind shakes it when it is ripe - upon which the Geese and Ducks get sudenly very fatt - the mennar that the Indians Dress it is they sit in there canoes and strip it of in the canoes - afterwards Dress it in a kettle then puts it into a moose skin bag and Rubs it with there feet and goes to the wind

> and clears the chaff out of it and Boils it and puts a little fatt to it which the Indians and indeed myself is very fond - it is near as Beneficial a grain as Rice for two Qts. will make four Gallons of good thick bargoe [burgoo - a stew or thick soup] (HBCA, B.3/a/73, fo. 15).

During the months of September and October the group moved slowly downriver, passing through Eagle, Sinepoet, and Rice Lakes before they reached Lake Winnipeg on 23 November 1777. Sutherland made an observation with his quadrant on Rice Lake and calculated it to be 52° 26' 00" north latitude. At the mouth of the river entering Lake Winnipeg the latitude was 52° 31' 00", and the opposite shore could not be sighted. These observations indicate that Sutherland had probably travelled down the Berens River and then branched northward to the Poplar River and descended it to its mouth at Lake Winnipeg (see fig. 4). The opposite shore of the lake can be seen from the mouth of the Berens but not the Poplar, giving further support to the Poplar as the location.

At Rice Lake Sutherland met Isaac Batt, a former HBC employee at York Fort and Cumberland House. Batt had left the company's service in 1775, and had joined the company of Montreal merchants headed by the Frobishers and McGill that was soon to grow into the North West Company. Batt's association with the Montreal traders was shortlived and he left their employ in the spring of 1777 (Brown 1979:47). When Sutherland met him on 13 October 1777 Batt was a free man but was soon to return to York Fort and re-engage with the Hudson's Bay Company. Batt may have been in transit at the time, but Sutherland viewed him with suspicion and believed that he was still attached to the "French" (HBCA, B.3/a/73, fo. 15d).

Sutherland and his party did not stay long on the shores of Lake Winnipeg, but he was impressed by its size and the resources of the surrounding country. He noted with particular interest the species of fish, especially the sturgeon, which were abundant in the rivers and lakes nearby. Over the course of the fall and winter Sutherland was invited to several "eat all" feasts in which great quantities of meat were consumed. Sutherland tried his best to eat his share but was ridiculed by his hosts when his stomach could not endure the entire feast.

Sutherland described Lake Winnipeg as the "Canadians Track to the Northward" and the Indians informed him that "many pedlars crossed this lake in september last but none pitches here" (HBCA, B.3/a/73, fo. 19d). Sutherland also learned something of the broader regional setting from the Indians he was travelling with. They told him that canoeists

> at hard paddling in the summer could get to Cumberland House in 5 days to York Fort in 13 days to Severn in 12 days and to Albany in 21 days and that Cumberland House bore about WNW, York Fort NEE, Severn ENE, and Albany E southerly, and the Indians that are always going down them rivers can give

> one a very near idea of both distances and bearances (HBCA, B.3/a/73, fo. 20d).

The accuracy of these observations indicates a wide geographic knowledge and a high degree of mobility. It is obvious that these Indians were well established fur traders with a keen awareness of the locations of trading posts and the routeways leading to them. William Falconer, the HBC master at Severn House, also observed at an earlier date that the "far off Indian canoes passing many falls are commonly paddled by young hearty people who seldom brings their children with them; so that on their journeying, to and again with their goods, they can carry canoes and goods all at once" (PAC MG19 D2: fo. 52).

During his stay with the Indians in the East Winnipeg Country, Sutherland did not meet any Canadian traders. He did learn, however, that two Canadian houses had been built that fall about 120 miles to the southward. Sutherland's camp was situated on a lake called Pash pick a haggan, which was probably somewhere along the Berens River. The Canadians were said to be at a lake called Nash pick a haggan, and the distance of 120 miles to the southward would place them in the vicinity of the inflow of the Winnipeg River. This would have been a logical place for Canadian settlements since it was located on the main transport route to the Great North.[21] The Indians who camped along the east coast of Lake Winnipeg were in the habit of going to the river mouths to trade with the Montreal pedlars. On 9 June 1778 Sutherland commented that many of the Indians around him were "going to the winapeg [Lake Winnipeg] to wait for the Canadians and trade with them in there way to Canada" (HBCA, B.3/a/73, fo. 40). This was a practice that William Tomison had witnessed ten years earlier.

The canoe trip to Albany was an extremely demanding journey of over 800 miles, and few Indians could be convinced to accompany Sutherland to the Bayside when European goods could be had at their own doorstep. Although Sutherland arrived back at Albany Fort in the summer of 1778 with five canoes of upland Indians well laden with furs, his mission was largely a failure, since the majority of the Indians had refused to come to Albany and instead traded their furs with the Canadians along the coast of Lake Winnipeg.

In the summer of 1778 Gloucester House was re-established on Washi Lake. John Kipling was in charge of the post, and this time extra provisions were sent from Albany. Many Indians gathered at the post in the fall, causing some alarm among the HBC men. It was also widely rumoured that a large band of Indians would attack Gloucester House during the winter (HBCA, B.78/a/4, fo. 5d). The attack did not materialize, but Kipling and his men spent many sleepless nights on sentry duty. The fur returns for 1778-79 amounted to 1,171 made beaver, which was a respectable trade for its first year of operation. However, Kipling felt that more inland posts would have to be established to preserve the company's trade in the future. The Canadian traders were thick among the upland Indians. Kipling wrote to Hutchins at Albany, "there is not a Lake nor Creek but what have a Trading house on it so that there is almost a Trader for every family of Indians that is in this part of the country" (ibid., fo. 22).

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[21] Recent archaeological investigations at the mouth of the Winnipeg River have uncovered trade goods from this period. In particular, a clay pipe stem was found with the inscription "Bannerman," which was a Montreal firm that operated from 1776 to 1779 (Steinbring 1980:129).

During the summer of 1779, Ezekiel Solomon's trader Germain Maugenest, his assistant Thomas Coates, seven Canadians, and three Indian guides passed by Gloucester House on their way to Albany Fort. Maugenest, complaining of ill usage, had deserted his trading post on Sturgeon Lake and had brought his men and furs to Albany with the prospect of engaging in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company. He expressed a desire to help the company regain control of the fur trade in Albany's hinterland. Maugenest, a native of France and resident of Montreal, had spent some time in the Mississippi fur trade prior to his engagement in the Little North in 1770 (HBCA, B.3/a/76, fo. 5d). Although he could speak little English, Maugenest had made a good impression on Chief Factor Hutchins at Albany. The two conversed in a mixture of French, English, Latin, and "Indian." He told Hutchins that he had "great influence with the Indians of the Petit Nord," and he had spent nine years in the area of "Rainy Lake, Woody Lake [Lake of the Woods], Petit River [?], and Nippigon (Annemepeg or Lake St. Anns) [Lake Nipigon] and on an Average of several Years, procured 60 french packs of one hundred made Beaver each" (ibid., fo. 3). Chief Factor Hutchins was wary of the Frenchman's motives and refused to engage him or his men. Instead he directed Maugenest to take his proposals to London and ordered the other Canadians to return to Sturgeon Lake and await Maugenest's return the next season.

To take advantage of this unexpected opportunity, Hutchins ordered George Sutherland to accompany Coates and the rest of Maugenest's men on their return to Sturgeon Lake, "to find out the Track and observe their manner of Travelling." Sutherland's experience in travelling inland and living among the Indians had obviously established him as Albany's most qualified servant to evaluate the chances of establishing inland trading settlements. Hutchins informed Sutherland that he was to travel with the Canadians but, upon his arrival at Sturgeon Lake, he was to winter with an Indian family that had earlier promised this favour to Hutchins. It was an ideal opportunity for Hutchins to obtain intelligence concerning the Canadian trading activities, and also to check the validity of Maugenest's story.

Sutherland's journal of occurrences at Sturgeon Lake during that season provides one of the most provocative and detailed accounts of the beginnings of Albany's trade inland. It not only sheds light on the early fur trade in the Little North, but also affords a gripping account of human suffering and endurance in the harsh environment of the Canadian Shield. Sutherland emerges from the pages of his journal as an unswervingly loyal employee, and also as a sensitive observer, given to commenting upon a diversity of topics ranging from the Canadians' table manners to ancient history.

Sutherland's first impressions of his Canadian competitors were not flattering:

> it takes no less than 4 french men to track[22] this canoe and I am shour two of our men would be able to do it this convinces me of the truth of the common fraze that one English are always able for two french... never did I see such a parcel of lazey fellows as these french men are, and they are fit to eat the divel and smoak his mother, for they must stop and smoak and eat at every miles end (HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo. 2).

As the journey progressed, he became less critical of them and began to understand their expertise in handling canoes and travelling through the country.

> if the french was lazy in tracking I find them very clever in the falls they understand the management of canoes in falls very well and carry very heavy loads (HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo. 2).

Shortly after passing Gloucester House, they came to Eabemit Lake (present Eabamet Lake) and Sutherland noted that a French trader had wintered there about seventeen or eighteen years earlier (ca. 1761). At that point, the party departed from the Albany River track that Sutherland had followed to Lake Winnipeg in 1777 and turned southwest toward Sturgeon Lake (fig. 4). On 10 September they reached the Wapinonick saca heggan, or the White Earth Lake (present White Clay Lake), and Sutherland was informed that they were now on the Okeke River (present Ogoki River) which was said to fall into the Albany River a long way above Henley House. He was also told that there was a "french house a little below the White Lake [present Whitewater Lake]." Farther upriver, at a waterfall, Sutherland remarked that they were near the pedlars' road leading to the house at Pashkokogan Lake where "Bartie" had previously wintered. This reference places them at the foot of present Kenoji Lake. On 14 September 1779, they entered a lake called Wabakama sacaheggan (present Wabakami Lake) and from there turned wouthwest on present Flindt River. Sutherland vividly described the Canadian Shield through which he was travelling at this time:

> the country for most part nothing but barron high rocky ground with a few burnd woods river broad and very little currant a man would be puzzled to find Earth enough to sew a quart of pease in twenty miles distance. I have travelled upwards of a thousand miles in the country before now but never did I see anything like this (HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo. 11).

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[22] Tracking was a term used to describe pulling boats or canoes with a line against a strong current or through shallow water.

As the party continued through this desolate upland terrain of barren rocks and burnt trees and neared the large lake called Nameu saca heggan, or Sturgeon Lake, Sutherland began to feel uneasy about his winter prospects. His suspicions were confirmed when the Indian with whom he was to pass the winter refused to take him in because:

> he had a large family and his country was very poor and the Indians always starved here abouts he likewise said that all the Indians here about would not be able to maintain one man among them all winter ho, lo, where the divel have I got to now (HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo. 13).

Sutherland had no choice other than to winter with Coates and his men. He soon learned that other pedlars were building a post at the opposite end of the lake. The house that Maugenest's men had built the previous winter had been burned to the ground. Coates received a poorly written letter explaining this action.

> Mr. Coates I have sent thes letre to tel you that Mr. [Alexander] Shaw and me has burraned your hus that Michel and bonou [Pierre Bonneau] mad[e] hear [here] we did this because you ran away with Mr. Solomons peltere (HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo. 13d).

The letter was signed by James Clark, one of Solomon's traders. Sutherland was determined to meet Clark and learn more about his trading operations. He did not have to wait long as a dinner invitation was extended shortly after his arrival. Clark prepared a meal that was obviously designed to impress his visitor from the Bay. Clark had his men hoist the flag and fire a salvo as Sutherland approached the post. Once inside the post Clark poured a glass of Jamaica rum and served an appetizer of pork and plum pudding. For supper the main dish consisted of the fur trade staple, whitefish, but Sutherland was favourably impressed with the salt, pepper, vinegar, and mustard that was spread out on the table. Sutherland spent the night at Clark's post and had a delicious breakfast of chocolate and pancakes before returning to his own small post (HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo. 14).

Sutherland noted in detail the hospitality that Clark extended to him, but he also recorded some of his inner thoughts about the state of affairs at Sturgeon Lake. He was particularly incensed about the fact that Clark wore a cutlass. In his journal Sutherland wrote that had he known of this, he would have brought his own sword "to swagger along side of these pedling animals" (HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo. 13d). Sutherland was also appalled at the lack of respect that Clark showed for the HBC charter. In one conversation Clark told him plainly that "it is not in your Company's pour [power] to hinder us because this part of the country belonged to Canada since Canada was Canada" (ibid., fo. 19d). Clark added that it was Solomon's wish to "get within one hundred miles of Hudson's Bay which I make no doubt but what we will in a few years." If successful, "we would not only get more furrs but of a better kind we sadly want our packs composed of your Hudsons Bay guinea martins"[23] (ibid., fo. 19d).

Sutherland also made a detailed description of Clark's trading post. His observations shed significant light upon the architecture of the Canadian posts, both in their exterior structure and interior compartmentalization. The building measured forty by twenty feet.

> the one half of Mr. Clark's Room and the Warehouse, the other half for the men with a garret above the whole, it is plastered outside and in with clay and straw mixt together, the Chimenys are built about two feet high with stones, then they are built all the way up with clay and straw in the form of lath and plaster... the roof is covered with clay and straw, or at least long grass, their floors are laid with head plank as pretty as can be, they likewise have got iron hinges to their doors and stock locks (HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo. 17d).

In his conversations with Clark, Sutherland was able to ascertain the numbers and locations of the other Canadian traders in the region. There were two canoes at "Oker" (Ochre) Lake (Red Lake), two at Eagle Lake (probably the Eagle Lake northeast of Lake of the Woods), two below the White Lake (Whitewater Lake), two at Animapeg or what the Hudson's Bay men called St. Anns (Lake Nipigon), two at the Pike (Pic), two at the Tikameg Lake (a lake between Lake Nipigon and Henley House), two at Mishipicottow (Michipicoten), one at the Dog Lake (seventy miles south of Sturgeon Lake), two houses at Lake la Pluie (Rainy Lake), one house at Lake Debois (Lake of the Woods), one house at Pashcocoggan (Pashkokogan) Lake, and the house on Sturgeon Lake where Clark and his eight men were settled (see fig. 3). The Albany officers had feared that increasing numbers of Canadian traders were among their upland Indians, but now George Sutherland had solid supporting evidence:

> here are no less than 17 houses that they have got to the Eastward of Lake Winnipeg and to the northward of Lake Superior just about Albany River it is no wonder that the trade is fallen of late at Albany and who can raise it one may strive till Eternity, give them presents and indulge them as much as he chuses and never be a bit better for it.... the pedlars are in every hole and corner where there are any Indians to be found.... besides as far as I can learn the pedlars give away more to the Indians then what we doo when we give them the most (HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo. 16d).

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[23] The quality of marten fur from the area of the northern forests closer to Hudson Bay was said to be far superior to the marten fur in more southerly latitudes. Furs from the north tended to be thicker and darker in colour, qualities which fetched higher prices at the fur market.

Furthermore, the Indians of the Sturgeon Lake area were quite content to stay near their winter hunting grounds and trade with the Canadians. An Indian chief confided, "we know very well that your cloth is better then that the french are but then when my coat is wore out the french will give me another if I am not able to buy one and that is more then you would doo if you was in my country" (HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo. 23d).

Questioning Clark about the economic organization of the Canadian fur trade, Sutherland learned that most of the trade was carried on by companies or partnerships and that the "country to the northward of Lake Superior is poisoned with them for it is impossible for a man to travel 150 miles any course without finding a pedlars house" (HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo.25d). From Lake Nipigon they followed different "roads" to their respective houses. Ezekiel Solomon was in charge of the fur trade in the Little North. Clark himself was one of Solomon's employees, as had been the deserter Maugenest. Shaw (Alexander Shaw), who wintered that year at Red Lake, was termed "Solomon's serjent."

Although Ezekiel Solomon controlled much of the Canadian fur trade in the Little North, a number of independent traders competed with the Solomon concerns. Sutherland noted that competition between Canadian traders drove up the price of furs considerably as each trader lowered his standard and gave out more presents of liquor and tobacco than usual. Sutherland marvelled at their ability to sell goods more cheaply than the Hudson's Bay Company, even though the Canadians had to travel more than 1,500 miles to their inland posts:

> if one of the Company's servants was to come here and trade and give away at this rate he would look very foolish when he went to make his accounts up (HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo. 28d).

Sutherland quickly realized that Maugenest had exaggerated his ability to control the fur trade of the Little North for the HBC. The fact of the matter, according to Clark, was that Maugenest was in debt to Solomon for 30,000 livres and had simply deserted to avoid payment.

Sutherland concluded that HBC chances of settling the Little North were dismal: "it is impossible even if the Company had twinty settlements in this part of the country the pedlars would have their share of the trade" (HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo.30). The major restraining factor was the lack of suitable men at Albany to conduct the trade. Maugenest had suggested that the company send out three clerks, but Sutherland warned that the tasks of Canadian clerks differed from those of the HBC trading masters. The former were not required to write journals or accounts, but they had to be proficient in communicating and trading with Indians. Sutherland claimed that there was no one at the Albany establishment capable of performing these duties. In an amusing analogy, Sutherland remarked that it would be better to send forty good fat hogs than men and goods because surely the men would perish, but the hogs could be used for next year's pork indent. Another major difficulty, according to Sutherland, was that the language spoken by the Sturgeon Lake Indians was different from that of the James Bay or Albany Fort Indians. This suggests that the Ojibwa near Sturgeon Lake were easily distinguished linguistically from the Cree residing in the James Bay Lowlands and the margins of the shield uplands.

Sutherland also believed that Albany's inland plans would be rendered futile by the lack of suitable canoes to convey men and goods through the rugged upland shield country. The route from Albany Fort to Sturgeon Lake was a long and difficult one, with numerous rapids and falls around which they would be forced to portage. The proposed inland settlements would require large canoes of the type used by the Canadians and procured from the Indians at Michilimackinac, Rainy Lake, and Lake of the Woods. The Indians of the Sturgeon Lake area were unable to make large canoes because the region lacked suitable building materials. Even if large canoes became available to the company, Sutherland doubted that the men at Albany could be able to use them: "such men as these are [as] incapable of working large canoes as I am to be Bishop in the Church of Rome" (HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo. 32). In addition, the Albany men lacked the necessary wilderness skills of hunting and fishing, which were essential for surviving in the Little North. He contrasted the situation with that at Cumberland House, where the Indians assisted in the canoes and also supplied the York men with provisions throughout the year. At Sturgeon Lake, the Indians did not help in transporting the canoes, and they certainly did not provide the traders with sufficient provisions during the winter of 1779-80.

While Clark and his men passed the winter at one end of the lake, Sutherland, Coates and the rest of his men wintered at the other end. Both parties suffered from hunger, and some of the Indians around them reportedly died of starvation. Slowly, Sutherland himself weakened as his hunger and the cold increased. Over the course of the winter, he and his party were obliged to eat their shoes, mittens, and even their snowshoe strings. During the month of March, Sutherland became extremely ill, and by April he could not move because of a sharp pain in his left side. He feared that he would die at Sturgeon Lake, but was saved from that fate by several Indian women who carried him to Gloucester House in their canoes after the spring break-up.

Sutherland concluded his journal by emphasizing the poor prospects of inland trading posts in the Sturgeon Lake area and indeed in the rest of the Little North. Maugenest was revealed as a traitor to his Canadian employer, Solomon, and Sutherland accused him of concealing the truth in order to get a safe passage aboard the company's ship to Europe. Coates, who was supposed to have remained at Sturgeon Lake, absolutely refused, and set off for Montreal with two of his men. Three of Maugenest's men died during the winter and the rest engaged with James Clark. As for Sutherland, he would not return to Sturgeon Lake, "not for the King of England['s] place for the rest of my life"[24] (HBCA, B.211/a/1, fo. 43).

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[24] George Sutherland took a year's leave of absence in 1780, but he

While George Sutherland was experiencing his bleak winter of 1779-80 at Sturgeon Lake, Germain Maugenest was meeting with the HBC Governing Committee in London. Despite George Sutherland's negative assessment of Albany's ability to establish and maintain inland trading posts, Maugenest convinced the London Committee to support his plans. The committee seems to have been impressed by Maugenest's experience as inland trader and by his specific proposals designed to improve the trade at Albany. These suggestions included the adoption of copper kettles with lids to replace the brass ones, and the inclusion of pointed blankets as a trade item. Pointed blankets (later known as point blankets) were so-called because each stripe or bar on the blanket represented one made beaver in value. Thus a two-point blanket could be purchased with two made beaver in furs. This was a convenient and easy way to value blankets, and point blankets had apparently been used successfully in the Montreal trade for some time (Rich and Johnson 1954:371). Perhaps most importantly, Maugenest advocated the use of shallow, flat-bottomed batteaux for Albany's inland service (HBCA, B.3/a/76, fo. 6)

The term batteaux was first used in North America to describe the flat-bottomed riverboats that were developed on the St. Lawrence River. These craft were typically about thirty feet long with tapered ends, and propelled by oars, poles, or sails (Avis et al. 1967:95). Perhaps the first batteau built in New France was that reported by the Jesuit priest Paul Ragueneau in 1657. In a letter describing his escape from an Onondaga Iroquois village he wrote:

> To supply the want of canoes, we had secretly constructed two batteaux of a new and excellent model for shooting the rapids. These batteaux drew but very little water, and carried a heavy load - fourteen or fifteen men, and fifteen or sixteen hundred livres in weight (Thwaites 1959, vol. 44:177).

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries batteaux were used extensively on the St. Lawrence River, especially above Montreal. Germain Maugenest was undoubtedly familiar with these craft, and may have employed batteaux in his earlier fur trading expeditions.

The Hudson's Bay Company had first used boats on the Albany River in 1746 to supply Henley House. Joseph Isbister, the master at Albany Fort, designed the first boat which was built by the company's carpenters. Little is known of the first Albany River boat other than descriptive comments that indicated it was a flat-bottomed boat. John Alwin, who has done the most complete study of HBC river

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was back at Albany in 1781. In 1785 he was sent to Severn House, and in 1786 was transferred to York Factory. After a successful term at York he was sent to take charge of Cumberland House in 1795 and Edmonton House in 1797. In 1798 he left the service of the Hudson's Bay Company when he learned that his deceased brother had left him a considerable amount of property (Brown 1979:726-727).

transportation, has suggested that "this elementary craft lacked the streamlined sophistication of the later York Boat" but "proved more durable than canoes" (Alwin 1978:102). Between 1746 and 1755 several of these boats, or barges as they were sometimes called, plied the Albany River between Albany Fort and Henley House. Alwin described them as follows:

> Rudder equipped, these boats were propelled by oars and setting poles or, if necessary, were tracked. They were also outfitted with sails which were frequently used on the broad and gentle lower reach of the Albany River (Alwin 1978:103).

Maugenest's batteaux appear to have been a more sophisticated flat-bottomed, shallow-draft craft. They were much lighter than the old Albany barges, thus offering much easier carriage over portages and when tracking against the current. The relative sizes of Albany boats and batteaux were provided in a letter from Albany's Chief Factor, John Hodgson, to York's Chief Factor, John McNab, on 17 July 1803 (see table 5). Although the specifications may have changed over time, Hodgson's measurements give a reasonably accurate picture of these craft.

Maugenest agreed to return to Albany Fort with a five year contract and a salary of £100 per year plus a bonus of five shillings per score of made beaver he was able to procure. With this generous salary and the title of "Albany Inland Factor," Maugenest returned to Albany with great expectations. However, upon his arrival, he soon learned of the disastrous occurrences at Sturgeon Lake the previous winter. With his men gone, his post destroyed, and no means of inland transportation in place, Maugenest had no alternative but to spend the winter at Albany Fort.

Thomas Hutchins and Maugenest spent the winter planning for the next year's journey, and in the enjoyment of each other's company. Hutchins confided to the London committee that he had "profitted much by his [Maugenest's] knowledge and liberal communication" (HBCA, B.3/a/79, fo. 2d). During these conversations Hutchins learned more of the nature of the Canadian trade. He appreciated the skills which the Canadians possessed and lamented the lack of such among his men.

> The people of Canada whose principal commerce arises from the inland trade, have studdied everything for its convenience and by long experience have arrived at great perfection in conducting it, having tradesmen on the spot for every branch, some packing the bales properly for the canoes, others making baskets, cases, rundlets etc. in which the nicest attention is paid to the stowage, and weight. The Canadian peasants are brought up to the service from their infancy so that a trader may engage any number of men ready trained and experienced to his hand. These are all great advantages which your Honours have not. When a servant comes first into this service as a labourer, he is akward

TABLE 5

Specifications of Albany Boats and Batteaux, 1803, by John Hodgson

The largest inland Boat

length of keel	36 feet
length from stern to stern overall	39 1/2 feet
length of main thaft *	12 feet 2 inches
length of fore thaft	10 feet 4 inches
length of after thaft	10 feet 10 inches
depth under main thaft to keelson†	2 feet
depth under fore thaft to keelson	2 feet 2 inches
depth under after thaft to keelson	2 feet 3 inches

A Batteau of 5 men

length of keel	19 feet 6 inches
length of main thaft	6 feet 3 1/2 inches
length of fore thaft	5 feet 4 inches
length of after thaft	5 feet 9 inches
depth under main thaft to keelson	1 foot 5 inches
depth under after thaft to keelson	1 foot 6 inches
depth under fore thaft to keelson	1 foot 8 inches

* thaft ? - a rower's bench
† keelson - a longitudinal structure running above and fastened to the keel of a boat in order to stiffen and strengthen its framework

Source: HBCA, B.3/b/39, fo. 37

> and clumsy as it is possible to conceive, and by the time he rendered useful for inland, he goes home, and we have to begin anew (HBCA, B.3/a/79, fo. 4).

Maugenest had brought with him from London a batteau which became the prototype for others built at Henley and Gloucester. This craft measured about thirty-two feet long by seven feet broad, and made its maiden voyage on the Albany to Gloucester run in September of 1780 (Alwin 1978:162). Maugenest and Hutchins also held further discussions regarding the location of the proposed inland post. Maugenest's preference for Sturgeon Lake was blunted by George Sutherland's report. Adding to Sutherland's negative assessment, John Kipling at Gloucester observed of the Sturgeon Lake area, "from what I can hear from the natives it is a barren country of provisions" (HBCA, B.3/b/18, fo. 7). It was thus decided that Maugenest should build his post on Pashkokogan Lake, which was closer to the Albany River.

News of Maugenest's intended journey spread rapidly beyond Gloucester House. Shortly before he set off from Albany, Indians brought word that, "Ezekiel Solomon (who is master of all the Trading Houses in this part of the Country) is at Packokagan" (HBCA, B.78/a/6, fo. 17). By June 1781, the Indians reported threatening news from Solomon:

> Solomon Moses [Ezekiel Solomon] has made an establishment at Pashcocoggan and awaits for Mr. Maugenest's arrival to take the trading goods away in lieu of a debt due to him from Mr. Maugenest" (HBCA, B.3/a/78, fo. 26).

Solomon obviously knew the geography of the Little North, since his trading post at Pashkokogan Lake was right in the track that any inland movement along the Albany River beyond Gloucester would have to follow. The master pedlar of the Little North, however, very likely had larger designs in mind than personal vengeance when he settled at Pashkokogan. He must have been concerned about the possible impact of Albany's proposed inland posts upon his previously secure trade with the Indians of the region. His personal appearance at Pashkokogan reflected this concern, and at the same time, demonstrated his determination to keep the Albany men pinned down along the margins of the Hudson Bay lowlands.

Despite Solomon's threats, the inland expedition proceeded in the spring with Maugenest in charge of twelve men chosen from Albany in the new batteaux. From the outset, the expedition was plagued with dissension. George Sutherland's misfortunes at Sturgeon Lake had instilled a fear of living inland among the Albany men and they refused to assist Maugenest unless they were given eight months' provisions at the outset of the journey. Hutchins wrote that "the poor fellows declared they had rather go on board a Man of War and die at once, than suffer a lingering death inland" (HBCA, B.3/a/79, fo. 4). The company also implemented a gratuity system that year which paid men who wintered at Henley an extra forty shillings per year, and those who went to Gloucester a percentage of the fur returns. The London Committee resolved that "To the principal person who may be appointed to reside at that place [Gloucester House] one shilling per score of Made Beaver. Six pence per score to his assistant, and three pence per score for each of the other servants employed under the same service" (HBCA, A.6/12, fo. 126). Despite these encouragements, three of the men refused to go beyond Henley House, while the remainder of the predominantly Orkney servants showed little respect for their French inland master. The journey was slow and hazardous and one batteau was damaged and its entire load lost on the way to Gloucester House. When the party finally reached Gloucester, a distressed Maugenest proclaimed, "I can't go inland with them for they don't understand this work at all" (HBCA, B.3/b/18, fo. 41d). Maugenest also concluded that he would be unable to take the batteaux any farther. As he wrote to Hutchins,

> I am partly convinced from self experience as well as by the information of every Indian who knows the Country that Batteaux or any wooden craft will never get to Lake Pishkocoggan the River being nothing but rocks & shoals for about half the way to a lake called Me, men, esca [Miminiska Lake] (HBCA, B.3/b/19, fo. 34).

Maugenest spent the winter of 1781-82 at Gloucester House. He obviously knew that Solomon was lying in wait for him at Pashkokogan and had no desire to push farther inland. Moreover, there was little prospect for trade in that direction, for as the Indians who visited Gloucester informed Kipling:

> Mr. Solomon the Jew is expected this fall with a great many men inland that he left 4 men with goods at one of his Houses inland and that they and Mr. Solomon himself gives 2 Beaver for every Beaver skin in order to break Mr. Maugenest Trade as he has heard of his coming inland (HBCA, B.78/a/7, fo.5d).

The following spring Hutchins directed Maugenest to make every effort to reach Pashkokogan Lake. From Indian information, Hutchins had learned that Solomon had "carried above 40 packs of furrs from thence last year" (HBCA, B.3/b/19, fo.27). Hutchins's orders were not heeded, however, and Maugenest again wintered at Gloucester.

The years 1782 and 1783 were marked with a series of disastrous events which significantly affected the fur trade of the Little North.[25] In August of 1782 a French naval squadron under Jean-François de Galaup, Comte de Lapérouse, unexpectedly entered Hudson Bay and ransacked Fort Prince of Wales and York Fort. This left HBC affairs on the bay in a shambles and emergency measures were adopted by the posts at the bottom of the bay to deal with this situation. Of greater significance to Albany's inland trade was the destruction of Henley House by fire in January 1782. The death of three men and the loss of goods and provisions were serious blows to the company's plan for inland expansion. Time and effort had to be directed toward the rebuilding of Henley, and away from the establishment of a post beyond Gloucester.

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[25] Other curious events happened during the years 1782 and 1783. One was an earthquake that shook the ground near Henley House on 27 November 1783. John McNab wrote in his journal that he was awakened in the middle of the night "by a slight shock of an Earthquake, it was preceded by a sound similar to a clap of thunder from which we could not have distinguished it, had not a very sensible undulatory motion of the Earth succeeded, which continued accompanying the sound about 1/2 minute, it shook the tent in such a manner as that some vials hanging near one another struck each other... the sound seemed to originate from the westward and gradually passed to the N.E." (HBCA, B.86/a/36, fo. 9).

The winter of 1782-83 was also marked by a devastating smallpox epidemic that raged among the Indians in the southern parts of the Little North. Numerous Indian reports during the winter and following spring revealed the extent of destruction. Areas that were particularly hard hit included Lake Nipigon and Sturgeon Lake, and the epidemic appeared to have spread from the southwest to the margins of the Albany River drainage basin. An Indian who visited Gloucester House on 26 May 1783 reported that "all the Indians on and near Lake Sturgeon are dead in that Cruel Disorder the small pox, that out of 2 Tribes of Indians that use to resort to this place not more than 2 or 3 children are alive" (HBCA, B.78/a/8, fo. 24d). The Canadian trading post on Sturgeon Lake was abandoned in mid-winter and, although there is no evidence of non-native deaths, the fur traders throughout the region found themselves in great difficulty. The smallpox epidemic spelled disaster for Solomon's business. Few or no returns could be made that year, and Solomon undoubtedly found it difficult to pay his creditors. Solomon did not return to the Little North the following year, and Indians reported that all the Canadians had deserted the country (HBCA, B.78/a/9, fo. 23d). The smallpox epidemic that had so ravaged the Indian population had also destroyed Solomon's trading empire.

Chapter IV

CROSSING PATHS IN THE WILDERNESS: ALBANY AND MONTREAL TRADERS MEET IN COMPETITION, 1782-91

In 1782, Edward Jarvis replaced Thomas Hutchins as the chief factor at Albany Fort. Jarvis, a London-born surgeon who had joined the Hudson's Bay Company in 1771, vowed to pursue a more aggressive inland policy.[26] One of his first steps in that direction was to recall Maugenest from Gloucester and send him to Moose Fort. Jarvis reasoned that Maugenest had purposefully refused to venture beyond Gloucester and, despite reports of Solomon's departure, he felt his service could be better used in the Moose River region. Maugenest reluctantly went to Moose Fort in 1783. Despite his repeated complaints of ill health and advancing age, Maugenest remained in the company's employ for nine more years. During this period he helped to establish several posts inland from Moose Fort. Maugenest retired from Rupert's Land in 1792 and died shortly after reaching London (Rich and Johnson 1954:364).

Jarvis's next move was to establish a permanent boat brigade between Albany Fort and Martin's Fall[27] located about 250 miles upriver. He appointed David Sanderson "patroon of the inland craft," to undertake this task. Sanderson was described as "ye fittest man to conduct the craft up ye falls, as he is more experienced and faithfuller than many" (HBCA, B.3/b/20, fo. 11d). In 1784, Sanderson built a log tent at Martin's Fall, which was the beginning of a permanent settlement at that spot (in 1795 Gloucester House was abandoned in favour of Martin's Fall). Beyond Martin's Fall the newly constructed batteaux would be used to forward goods to Gloucester House. Jarvis reasoned that an effective supply link was the first step in "extending and enlarging the Company's trade" (HBCA, B.78/a/9, fo. 10). Once this had been done, he envisioned a chain of settlements through the Little North which would extend the company's influence and increase the trade for Albany.

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[26] See biography of Edward Jarvis in Rich and Johnson 1954:350-353.

[27] The name Martin's Fall may have been based on an Indian place name meaning the marten waterfall, but it was probably named after John Martin who was employed at Albany Fort from 1767 to 1779. In the summer of 1774 Martin made an exploration of the Albany River above Henley House, and he may have been the first man from the fort to view the rapids (HBCA, B.3/b/11, fo. 12). Regarding the naming of lakes and rivers, Peter Fidler commented in 1818 that "our Albany men... used formerly to give names to any place [after] who would give them the most grog; and it was the common custom whenever they passed it afterwards if the person was in company to give all hands each a Dram" (HBCA, B.22/a/21, fo. 8).

Jarvis's inland plans were delayed, however, by the fire which levelled Henley House during the winter of 1782-83. Four years had passed since George Sutherland's journey to Sturgeon Lake, and still the men at Albany had failed to proceed beyond Gloucester. In the spring of 1784, Jarvis appointed James Sutherland, the assistant trader at Gloucester, to conduct explorations into the interior uplands. Of special interest to Jarvis was the Lake Nipigon area, and his orders to Sutherland reflect this concern:

> explore the country from Gloster to Lake St. Ann or called Animepick or sometimes Almepegon... the above Lake has been long an object recommended to our attention by the Honourable Company, and by what we can learn has a direct communication with Lake Superior is much resorted to by Indians who are out of the immediate Track of Gloster (HBCA, B.78/a/9, fo. 10).

The country beyond Gloucester was still virtually unknown to the Albany men. Despite George Sutherland's earlier inland experiences and Maugenest's communications with Albany's officers, Jarvis had acquired little knowledge of its geography. John Kipling's experience at the forefront of Albany's inland operations at Gloucester, however, had enabled him to gain a better understanding of the interior, and he wrote to Jarvis advising:

> I shall send James Sutherland inland as Early in summer as I can, to Explore the country, but I am of opinion that our main object should be to survey the road between Gloustr and Piskoggogan Lake as that is the rout of all the Indians... The making a settlement on St. Anns according to indian report in not practicable from Gloustr (HBCA, B.78/a/9, fo. 13).

Jarvis's enthusiasm for expanding Albany's inland trade was further stimulated by continuing news from Gloucester that Ezekiel Solomon and his traders had withdrawn. Kipling wrote that "the Canadians abandon[ed] this part of the country, out of 7 Houses that was in the vicinity of Gloucestr when it was first settled there is now but three" (HBCA, B.78/a/9, fo. 23d). To take advantage of this situation James Sutherland was sent to explore Pashkokogan Lake. On 20 May 1784, Sutherland set off from Gloucester accompanied by John Richards and two Indian guides. After nine days' travel by canoe they reached "Piskocoggan Lake" where they found a Canadian trading post, a crude log structure which Sutherland likened to a "Hoggstie." A solitary Canadian trader was in the post. He had been left to pass the summer while the rest of the Canadians took their furs to Lake Superior. Sutherland learned that the Canadians had traded fifteen bundles of furs valued at approximately 1,200 made beaver. They had two other trading posts; one on Crow Nest Lake (present Springpole Lake) which was farther upstream on the Albany River, and one on St. Anns Lake (present Lake Nipigon). During his survey of Pashkokogan Lake, Sutherland met another Canadian trader. He was not associated with the others, but was described as "a man for himself" (HBCA, B.78/a/11, fo. 7). This unnamed independent trader (probably Pierre Bonneau, see page 49) had been in the country for fifteen years, probably in Solomon's employ, and now attempted to trade on his own account. He told Sutherland that Solomon had been poisoned by Indians and had been taken to Michilimackinac very ill. With Solomon out of the picture, John Kipling remarked that the remaining traders in the Little North were men of no circumstance (HBCA, B.78/a/10, fo. 3d).

Solomon's withdrawal from the Little North left an opening that was filled by his former partner William Grant. In 1782 Grant formed a partnership with Gabriel Cotté, a Montreal supplier, to trade in the Nipigon country (Duckworth 1985:3). Alexander Shaw, another of Solomon's former associates, was taken into the partnership in 1785, and Grant was dropped a year later (ibid., 3). Thereafter, Shaw and Cotté operated together, with Shaw acting as the wintering partner while Cotté arranged the trade from Montreal. However, Solomon's successors were slow to re-establish the fur trade in the Little North. In 1783-84 they had only three posts, and the Hudson's Bay Company seized this opportunity to push inland from Gloucester House. The HBC officers at Albany and Gloucester had differing opinions about where the next post should be built. Some were in favour of Pashkokogan Lake while others supported Lake Nipigon. To solve this problem Jarvis directed James Sutherland to make an exploration of Lake Nipigon. One month after his survey of Pashkokogan Lake, Sutherland set off for Lake Nipigon accompanied by John Richards and two Indian guides from the Gloucester area. The party reached the lake on 15 July 1784. Sutherland's Indian guides refused to take him to the Canadian post on Lake Nipigon, however, because they feared the local Nipigon Indians. This fear was commonly expressed by Indians who lived north of Lake Nipigon, and probably reflected earlier hostility with the Nipigon Indians. Sutherland was impressed with the resources of the country and remarked that it "swarms with Beaver" (HBCA, B.78/a/11, fo. 12). However, the journey to Lake Nipigon had been difficult and Sutherland reported that "it is not practicable to get to that lake with any craft from this House [Gloucester]" (HBCA, B.78/a/9, fo. 26).

Sutherland's inland explorations in the summer of 1784 had given the Albany men a better picture of the interior country. Pashkokogan Lake had proved to be accessible from Gloucester, and trading prospects there appeared to be good. Access to Lake Nipigon was difficult but Kipling and Sutherland both regarded that lake as a strategic place to counter the Canadian fur trade, for it was the place from which all the "pedlars" entered the Little North. Kipling wrote:

> if your Honors had a House on that lake and 10 Bold resolute men at it, they would stop any of the Traders from coming in to this part of the Country for the future (HBCA, B.78/a/10, fo. 4).

The plan to blockade the Canadian traders at Lake Nipigon was not approved by the company, however, for it ran counter to the HBC policy of non-aggression toward the Canadians.[28] The company's main interest was therefore directed back toward the country along Albany River's upland valley to Pashkokogan Lake.

Another reason for proceeding to Pashkokogan Lake was the report made by Indians of a bountiful region called "the Manatie Country" which lay southwest of Pashkokogan Lake. An Indian captain named Newitchicaniscum told Kipling that in the Manatie Country there were "a great number of Indians which go by the name of jeppoys [Ojibwa] who has no trader among them, that they are remarkably fond of the Company's guns cloth etc., that they understand well how to build the large canoes (we are so much in want of), that their country abounds in Indian corn [wild rice] and moose" (HBCA, B.78/a/9, fo. 23d). The Manatie, or Monontagué Country as it was known to the Canadian traders, was the region near present Lake Minnitaki just southeast of Lac Seul. Jarvis was also anxious to build another inland settlement because he feared the Canadians would soon return in full force to the Little North. The Indian captain Metweash visited Gloucester House in the summer of 1784 and told Kipling that a party of six "Englishmen" had passed through his country (HBCA, B.78/a/9, fo. 23d). Metweash further reported that the "chief man" stopped often to observe the sun with a quadrant. Kipling rightly judged him to be "Mr. Edward Umfravil [Umfreville]" who had served with the company at York Factory, but had recently engaged in the service of the North West Company. Umfreville's presence in the Little North occasioned some alarm at Albany Fort, and hastened the plans to build additional inland posts.

Umfreville had been sent by the North West Company to survey a canoe route between Lake Nipigon and Lake Winnipeg. The route traditionally taken by the Montreal traders from Grand Portage had been determined to be in American territory by the 1783 Treaty of Paris, so Umfreville's task was to establish the viability of an alternate route from Lake Nipigon to the continental interior. Although Canadian fur traders for many years had been travelling through the Nipigon country, the newly formed North West Company had yet to establish a foothold in this region. Umfreville's journey was therefore of concern to Shaw and Cotté as well as the Hudson's Bay Company.

Umfreville had begun his inland journey on 16 June 1784 at Pays Plat, east of the Nipigon River, where an Indian was engaged to guide his canoe through Lake Nipigon. Midway through Lake Nipigon the guide became troublesome, but the party proceeded when Umfreville met an old

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[28] The HBC policy regarding relationships with the Canadian traders was outlined in the draft of instructions to John Kipling when he built Gloucester House. He was reminded, "should any Canadian traders be near you, you are to live upon the most friendly terms with them" (HBCA, B.3/b/14, fo. 14d).

Indian acquaintance travelling through the lake who promised to guide them. He had visited Umfreville at Severn House on the coast of Hudson Bay (Umfreville had spent the season of 1773-74 at Severn). The Indian was a resident of Sturgeon Lake who was travelling through Lake Nipigon with his family in two canoes. Umfreville must have marvelled at the remarkable mobility of these Indians as the distance between Severn House and Lake Nipigon was well over 500 miles by canoe. This Sturgeon Lake acquaintance agreed to guide Umfreville the rest of the way, but their relationship turned sour when they reached Wabinosh Bay at the head of Lake Nipigon. Here, the guide whom Umfreville described as possessing "all the duplicity of the devil himself," refused to proceed farther (Douglas 1929:33).[29]

Umfreville had learned that some "French" fur traders were expected to pass by any day, so he resolved to await their arrival and attempt to engage one of them as a guide. One day later, on 28 June 1784, a man named Constant arrived. Since he was already "a guide in the service of Monsieur Coté [Gabriel Cotté]," Constant would not agree to act as guide but he reported that there was another experienced trader nearby named Pierre Bonneau who was "not at present engaged to anyone" (Douglas 1929:21-22). Bonneau was likely the same man James Sutherland met at Pashkokogan Lake on 31 May 1784 (HBCA, B.78/a/11, fo. 7). Bonneau readily agreed to serve as guide for Umfreville as far as Sturgeon Lake. As the party prepared to resume their journey Umfreville noted the passage of two more canoes that belonged to Cotté.

Umfreville did not mention anything else relating to the fur trade until he reached the "portage de Fort" leading to Sturgeon Lake. There he found the remains of "an old settlement where a Mr. James wintered six years ago" (Douglas 1929:33). This must have been the post operated by James Clark in 1779-80. At Sturgeon Lake Bonneau quit as guide but continued with the party while a Sturgeon Lake Indian guided them to the Winnipeg River. On 15 July 1784 they reached Lac Seul and passed by "an old settlement of Mr. Lyons" (ibid., 41). It is conceivable that this referred to Benjamin Lyons, who had previously been in partnership with Ezekiel Solomon.[30] Unfortunately Umfreville provided no other information on Mr. Lyons, so that positive identification is tenuous. At Lac Seul Umfreville began to be reminded of his former employers, the Hudson's Bay Company. Lac Seul was along one track which Indians took to travel to the Albany River and then down to the HBC posts. From Lac Seul the party made its way quickly to the English River and descended it to the Winnipeg River canoe route from Grand Portage.

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[29] Umfreville's journal, published in 1929, provides a detailed account of the canoe route from Lake Nipigon to the Winnipeg River. It also contains valuable information relating to the general state of the fur trade during the summer of 1784 (Douglas 1929).

[30] The editor, R. Douglas, supposed the trader to be Benjamin Lyons, "a merchant who resided in Mackinac in 1778" (Douglas 1929:9)

Despite the numerous portages and difficulties encountered on the journey, Umfreville strongly recommended the Nipigon route to his employers. In fact, he regarded it to be "preferable to the course by the Grand Portage" (Douglas 1929:10). He was especially impressed with the good fishing places along the way, and the fact that wild rice could be easily traded from the Indians who lived on the route. However, the North West Company did not act immediately to abandon Grand Portage, and the Nipigon route was ultimately dropped from consideration. The signing of Jay's Treaty in 1794 finally forced the Nor'Westers to move north of Grand Portage. The North West Company remained at Grand Portage until 1803, and then opted for the old Kaministiquia (Fort William) route that had been used during the French period. Umfreville's expedition was not a wasted effort. It provided essential information on the resources and geography of the Little North, a region the North West Company would later penetrate.

At Kis-kis-caw-pe-che-wan, (probably Escabitchewan) about twenty leagues (roughly fifty miles) from Lac Seul, Umfreville wrote a letter to the HBC officers at Albany, conveying the findings of his journey. Interestingly, he argued that the fur trade could support both the Canadian traders and the Hudson's Bay Company: "the Country is big enough for us all, there are animals enough, but Indians diminish fast by ye operation of your Brandy and Canadian Rum" (HBCA, B.3/b/22, fo. 44). Umfreville's latter comment foreshadowed a problem that would continue to plague the fur trade for many years as competition intensified.

Edward Jarvis did not share Umfreville's views on the fur trade. Instead, he saw the Canadian traders as interlopers and was determined to drive them out of the country. The use of force was not necessary; the Canadians could be eased out of the trade by the superior quality of HBC goods (HBCA, B.3/b/22, fo. 48d). To pursue this goal Jarvis sent John Best inland in 1785 to establish a trading post on Pashkokogan Lake. Best was a carpenter who joined the company in 1773, and had since become an active and enthusiastic inland traveller. Best's enthusiasm for the journey was not shared by the other men, mostly Orkney servants, at Albany. The spectre of George Sutherland's ordeal still haunted them, and Jarvis was forced to post an official notice ordering the men not to decline going inland.

Eventually eight men were picked to assist Best and the party departed from Albany in the summer of 1785. They reached Gloucester on 20 August 1785, and then rowed upriver roughly eighty miles until they reached "Memenusca Lake" (present Miminiska Lake) on 11 September. At this point Best found it impossible to proceed farther with the batteaux (an obstacle that Maugenest had earlier outlined) and decided to remain there during the winter. The news of Best's failure provoked Jarvis into sharp criticism of his Orkney men: "if your honors were to engage Canadians at the grand Portage perhaps they might be employed to advantage and at less expense, beyond Pascocoggan under your old officers, than your orkney servants who the further they go the more they dislike the service" (HBCA, B.3/a/87, fo. 10). Jarvis's remarks recall George Sutherland's conclusions in 1780, and

Thomas Hutchins's observations in 1782. Canadians were known to be more adapted to inland travelling and living than were the predominantly Orkney servants of the company.

Best's party found it impossible to travel farther than Memenusca Lake with the batteaux which were difficult to manipulate past the rapids and shallow stretches of the Albany River. They built a temporary house on the lake, but made preparations to push farther inland in the spring. News of the HBC settlement caused some alarm among the Canadian traders. It was rumoured in the fall of 1785 that the Canadians had abandoned the post on Pashkokogan Lake because of the Albany inland push, and removed to a post farther west at Crow Nest Lake (present Springpole Lake). Best learned that the Canadian trader's name was "Mr. [Alexander] Shaw," and that Shaw intended to build another post two hundred miles to the west where "he interrupts all the Indians who come down country" (HBCA, B.78/a/13, fo. 24d). Other reports indicated that James Clark had a trading post on "Skunk Head Lake" (present Shikag Lake) (ibid., fo. 22). It is apparent from these and other comments that Shaw and Cotté had revitalized their efforts in the fur trade of the Little North, and were moving aggressively into new areas.

One of the goals of Jarvis's inland expansion was to build a post in the so-called Monontagué Country. He had been prepared to send James Sutherland on an exploration to that area in the summer of 1785, but his plans were frustrated by the news that the intended Indian guides had gone to war against the "Pot Indians [Sioux]"[31] (HBCA, B.78/a/12, fo.19). War parties had been raised among many of the upland Indian bands, but they returned in late summer without having fought a battle with their enemies (ibid., fo. 22d). In the summer of 1786 peaceful conditions resumed and Sutherland's journey to the Monontagué Country was readied. On 12 June 1786 Sutherland left Gloucester House with his companion John Richards and an Indian guide, Captain Newitchicaniscum. This captain had a reputation of being "a great war chief," and was regarded as a man of considerable influence among his people (ibid., fo. 19). Their route took them to *Miskiggogamy* Lake (present Lake St. Joseph), across the height of land and then down the *Atapey Sipey* (present Root River) to *Upishingunga* Lake (present Lac Seul). (See Sutherland's sketch map: fig. 5). Enroute the party increased in size as several prominent Indians and their followers joined the travellers. These included Caupermertissewinikee, the captain who had guided George Sutherland to Lake Winnipeg in 1777, and Captains Shequemaps, Nowtenwe, Eacucukenaps, and Metweash. The last especially was considered to be a "man of great power among all the Indians in this part of the Country" (HBCA, B.78/a/15, fo. 4d).

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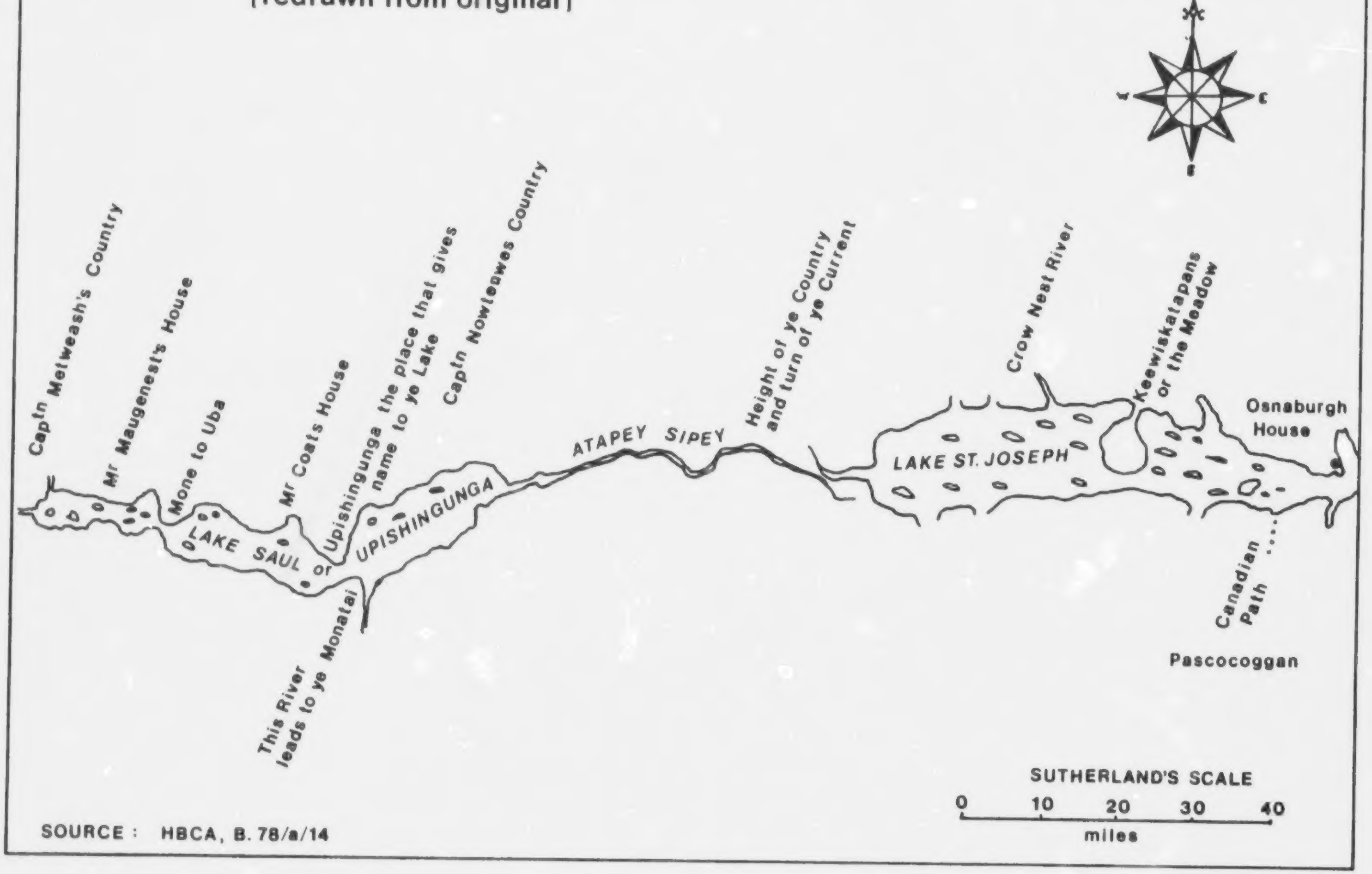
[31] The Ojibwa word for the Sioux was pwāt (David Pentland, personal communication).

FIGURE 5 : JAMES SUTHERLAND'S SKETCH MAP, 1786
[redrawn from original]


Captn Metweash's Country
Mr Maugenest's House
Mone to Uba
Mr Coats House
Upishingunga the place that gives name to ye Lake
Captn Nowtaewes Country
LAKE SAUL or UPISHINGUNGA
This River leads to ye Monatai
ATAPEY SIPEY
Height of ye Country and turn of ye Current
LAKE ST. JOSEPH
Crow Nest River
Keewiskatapans or the Meadow
Osnaburgh House
Canadian Path
Pascocoggan
SUTHERLAND'S SCALE
0
10
20
30
40
miles

SOURCE : HBCA, B. 78/a/14

At Lac Seul Sutherland encountered some difficulty with Captain Newitchicaniscum. The captain and his people refused to take him to the Monontagué Country, and instead, left him under the care of Captain Metweash whose encampment was located near the western end of Lac Seul. Metweash for his part welcomed Sutherland and treated him as one of his family. Sutherland spent one month with Metweash and recorded many aspects of the daily life of this group of Indians. Metweash's immediate family consisted of twenty-eight persons including wives, sons, daughters, brothers, and other relations (HBCA, B.78/a/15, fo. 4d). In addition, many other Indians visited the encampment and joined in feasts and conjuring. During the month of July game was abundant and there were "eat-all" feasts nearly every other night. Metweash presided over these affairs like a king. Sutherland remarked that "Captain Metweash being an old man has left off hunting, having plenty of sons and sons in law which hunts for him who lays all they kill down at his feet when they bring it" (ibid., fo. 3d). Beside fresh game and fish the Indians had "Buffelo Ruaheggan," or pemmican, which they used while travelling. Sutherland learned that they traded it from the Canadians who wintered near the plains (ibid., fo. 6). Metweash kept his people busy building canoes for trade with the Canadians. In fifteen days the Indians built ten canoes each of which was worth sixty to one hundred made beaver in trade goods. The demand for canoes was high and Metweash informed Sutherland that the Canadians had travelled to the Great North in one hundred large canoes from Grand Portage in the fall of 1785.

Sutherland returned to Gloucester at the end of July 1786. He had learned a great deal at Lac Seul, and "parted from Metweash with the affection I would from a father" (HBCA, B.78/a/15, fo. 6). Sutherland had proven himself to be one of the company's best men for inland service, but he did not consider himself well suited for that type of life:

> I am sorry that roving about with Indians does not agree with my Constitution being always sickly with living on their course filthy diet. It requires a man stout, and healthy who had been brought up in a laboureous way, such a person who could without reluctance adopt the Indian manners and customs might do great good by going inland, as the Indians are very fond of an Englishman among them, and would gather to him in the spring to come down with him, but the contrary would be the effect of a man not pleasing the Indians, for should he laugh at their superstitious ways, or advise them to a contrary application of their medicines they would be highly affronted with him, and might be a means of endangering his safety, he must be grave when they are grave, laugh when they laugh, and do as they do, if he wants to please Indians (HBCA, B.78/a/14, fo. 7).

While Sutherland tented with Metweash at Lac Seul, John Best proceeded from Gloucester House with two smaller batteaux and built a house on Miskigogamy Lake (present Lake St. Joseph). Best decided the most appropriate place for his trading post would be on the north shore of the lake, opposite the "Canadian path," or the route which the Canadians used to travel through Lake St. Joseph from Pashkokogan to Crow Nest Lake (see fig. 5). Best was a skilled carpenter, and his post was quickly and efficiently built. As Best described it, "we have got a good house built over our heads now it is 40 feet by 22 with 4 angles of a new construction that answers the same end as flankers, and much easier built" (HBCA, B.3/b/24, fo. 17). The house was originally called Miscacoggamy House, but soon after its construction it received the name of Osnaburgh House. It was not the first house on the lake for Best found the remains of two recently deserted Canadian posts there, evidence again that the Hudson's Bay Company would have to redouble its efforts in order to steal a march on the pedlars.

On 8 September 1786 a Canadian trader named "John Tupa [Toupin ?] alias Mekissue [meaning eagle in Ojibwa]" visited Best (HBCA, A.11/5, fo. 77). Tupa had nine men with him and only one, an American named David Michael, could speak English. Best described Tupa as "a very polite well bred Gentleman" (HBCA, B.155/a/1, fo. 8d). He was on his way to Cat Lake with a large canoe full of trading goods. This presented some difficulty for Best as Cat Lake was nearby and a Canadian post there could draw Indians away from his post. However, Best, like Maugenest before him, was given the authority to trade his goods at a flexible rate. This meant that he could counter the Canadian competition and lower his prices accordingly. The Indians quickly realized the advantage of having that kind of competition for their furs. As Edward Clouston, the assistant trader at Osnaburgh, commented, "the Indians are sensible to the superiority of our goods to the Canadians but they find by experience that by trading part of their Furs [with the HBC] and part with the Canadians they make more then if they were to trade all with one" (HBCA, B.3/b/24, fo. 40).

Best and Clouston learned much about the Canadian manner of trade through their conversations with David Michael. Like the traders previously in Solomon's employ, Tupa was provided with food for the entire season (HBCA, A.11/5, fo. 85). The remainder of the men were obliged to pay for non-country provisions such as flour and sugar. Tupa's salary was 350 dollars per year, which, according to Clouston, amounted to approximately eighty pounds sterling. In contrast, Best was paid forty pounds and Clouston received only twenty pounds per year (HBCA, B.3/a/98, fo. 92d). Tupa was also allowed to trap furs himself and sell them at Montreal. In addition, he was given a percentage of the total value of fur returns at his post. The HBC men were also allowed to trap furs near the post and sell them to the company, and gratuities were paid for inland service. Premiums were paid at different rates to the men on the total fur returns of the post. The master of an inland post was paid one shilling per score of made beaver, his assistant received six pence, and the rest of the men received three pence each. In 1782 the company paid five pounds, seven shillings and three pence to James Sutherland at Gloucester (total trade was 4292 made beaver) and two pounds, thirteen shillings and seven pence to each of the eight men at the post (HBCA, A.63/5, fo. 3).

The HBC trade at Osnaburgh House during the first year was promising, comprising a value of 1,391 made beaver, of which more than half consisted of beaver pelts (HBCA, B.3/d/96, fo. 93). Best soon discovered, however, that he had to give as much away in presents to the Indians as he traded for furs. The major item of expense was brandy, which the Indians regularly demanded before trading could begin. Brandy also had to be expended for Indian guiding services and for country provisions such as venison and wild rice. Once the Indians were persuaded to trade their furs, they usually preferred to obtain goods of a more practical nature such as blankets and guns.

The trading practices of the Indians of the Little North differed markedly from those of the Great North, and particularly from those of the prairie and parkland Indians. This difference was first noted by Philip Turnor, the HBC surveyor, who travelled extensively in both parts of the northwest. While he was at Gloucester House in the summer of 1780 Turner noted that "at Cumberland House Brandy is the chief trade all Powder, Shot, Tobacco, Knives, Flints, Steels, Paint and small articles are given and at this place [Gloucester House] the chief trade is in Cloth, Blankets, Powder, Shot, Guns and Ironwork and some Tobacco, the Brandy mostly given and greatest part of the Tobacco" (Tyrrell 1934:274). The reason for these differences, according to Turnor, was based upon the natural resources of the two regions. In the prairie parkland south of Cumberland House the buffalo abounded. Therefore the Indians had little need for cloth or blankets, and such items were considered to be luxuries. Turnor also remarked that since the Cumberland Indians could hunt the buffalo easily with bow and arrow, firearms were not necessary trade items (Tyrrell 1934:274). In contrast, the Indians about Gloucester House depended upon the gun to hunt game such as moose, caribou, bear, and wildfowl. Cloth and blankets were also in high demand because leather from large game was not as easily or regularly available. The Gloucester Indians received a gift of liquor before the trading began, while the Cumberland Indians would trade for liquor as long as their supply of furs held out, which sometimes lasted four or five days. Liquor was not a trade item at Gloucester because the Canadian traders offered it free. This had been a longstanding practice, and it was one that could not easily be changed.

Although the HBC trade at Osnaburgh House in 1786-87 was encouraging, the Canadian traders also received many fine packs of furs. Tupa's trade at Cat Lake was estimated by Best to be roughly equal to that of Osnaburgh, but there were several other Canadian posts collecting furs in the region. Best met with Tupa on his return to Lake Superior in the spring of 1787, and had a chance to appraise the Canadian trade goods. He was surprised to find that many of the items were of excellent quality. He also learned from the Indians that they preferred Canadian rum over the company's brandy. These observations convinced Best that the Hudson's Bay Company could no longer count on the superior quality of its goods to gain an advantage in the trade. It would have to match the Canadians in manpower and trading posts to hold its own.

The establishment of Osnaburgh House greatly increased contact between the Hudson's Bay Company and the Canadians. It also spurred the Canadian traders to expand farther westward and northward to be free of the Hudson's Bay Company now following in their wake. In so doing, they moved deeper into the trading hinterland of Severn House and, to some extent, York Factory. As early as 1777, Matthew Cocking at Severn House learned from Indians that Canadian traders were at Cat Lake: "They inform me that two canoes of Canadian Pedlars wintered at the Cat Lake and which is only three days paddle from here" (HBCA, B.198/a/22, fo. 38). Although Cat Lake lay at the headwaters of the Albany River, it provided easy access to the Severn basin. Further Indian information received at Severn showed that at least one Canadian post was operating on Cat Lake from 1777 onward. Robert Goodwin, who took over from Best as master of Osnaburgh in 1787-88, regarded the Cat Lake area as the next logical inland objective for the company. He wrote to Albany informing Jarvis of his desire to send two batteaux to Cat Lake in the fall of 1788.

During the summer of 1788, Goodwin took an unusual step for the company by engaging David Michael. Michael had worked in the Little North for a number of years under James Clark and Tupa. Previously he had traded in the Lake Abitibi region (HBCA, A.11/5, fo. 82). Jarvis was pleased with Goodwin's action and wrote to the company directors in London that Michael "appears very fit for the Company's service being to all appearances well acquainted with the country in every direction and capable of bearing the greatest hardships" (HBCA, B.3/b/25, fo. 57d). Hiring Canadians (Michael was actually an American by birth) had been much talked about at Albany, but ever since Maugenest's removal in 1784, the HBC trade had been conducted entirely by British personnel. Jarvis hoped that engaging experienced Canadians would help the company to keep up with its competitors who were rapidly expanding to the west and north.

The first step beyond Osnaburgh was to Cat Lake at the headwaters of the Albany River. John Best was chosen to lead the expedition and the party set off from Osnaburgh on 6 August 1788. Before they could leave two Indians had to be engaged to guide them, since no one at Osnaburgh knew how to find Cat Lake.[32] The party proceeded upriver in one batteau and two canoes. After nine days filled with difficult portages, they reached Cat Lake. Best then requested his guides to conduct him to Tupa's old post, beside which he intended to build his own house. However, they found the post abandoned. Possibly, news of the Albany expedition to Cat Lake deflected the elusive Canadians from the area. Best and his men were thus unopposed during the winter of 1788-89.

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[32] The fact that no European knew the way to Cat Lake is not surprising. The first surveyor to travel through this region, Thomas Fawcett, reported similar difficulties on his journey from Osnaburgh to Cat Lake in 1885: "I reached the place where the route to Cat Lake turns off. In order to find the way I had to engage a guide at Osnaburgh, and also retain my former guide, as I could not get one who understood, and none of my men except the Indian guide could speak, the Indian language. I had been informed several times previous to this that the route to Cat Lake was a difficult one to find, and that the Indians themselves often missed the way after they had been over the route several times. This I found to be the case, as the guide had to stop and study sometimes before he would advance, and would occasionally change his course. The route

At Osnaburgh, meanwhile, four more Canadians, Simon Beaugrand, Louis Galliard, Jacques Jebau, and Jean-Baptiste La Roche, offered to engage in the company's service (HBCA, B.155/a/3, fo. 6). Simon Beaugrand had been Tupa's assistant at Cat Lake the previous two seasons. All of them were hired, Beaugrand at twelve pounds and the others at ten pounds per year plus the usual bounties and premiums for inland service. Goodwin dispatched them to join Best at Cat Lake as replacements for the British servants. He obviously felt that the Canadians would be most useful at the frontier post where Best and his men were unfamiliar with the surroundings.

Best's first impressions of the prospects for trade at Cat Lake were highly favourable and he wrote to Goodwin, "sir now is the time for a push if we had plenty of goods & big canoes, I think we could drive every Trader out of the country at least those that comes in to this part of it" (HBCA, B.155/a/3, fo. 8). Best's enthusiasm was dampened during the winter. Cat Lake proved to be a poor place for country provisions, and the men suffered hardships, although the post was able to procure a substantial trade amounting to 1,115 made beaver (HBCA, B.3/d/99, fo. 46). The Indians who inhabited the vicinity exhibited much the same behaviour as those trading at Osnaburgh, demanding large presents of brandy and trading their furs for goods such as blankets, guns, hatchets, and files.

Jarvis was pleased with the returns from Cat Lake when they reached Albany in the spring of 1789. He felt, however, that it would be unnecessary to retain a post there since the Canadians had deserted it. He quickly changed his views when he was informed that the Canadians planned to return there in the fall, and Best was ordered to return to Cat Lake to oppose them.

Goodwin had informed Jarvis that Cat Lake was closer to Severn than to Albany, so Jarvis also ordered Richard Perkins, "an intelligent man," to "proceed to Cat Lake and from thence to Severn with Indians, or David Michael if no Indians can be procured" (HBCA, B.3/b/26, fo. 24). Goodwin engaged two Indian guides for Perkins, who successfully reached Severn House that summer and made a sketch of his route (fig. 6). Perkins's survey of the country between Cat Lake and Severn House

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is made up of a succession of lakes joined by narrow channels, assuming the form of a river only at these places and for but a short distance at a time. The lakes are full of islands and their extent could not be determined without making a survey of their shores" (Fawcett 1886:36).

provided the company with much needed geographical information and proved that Cat Lake was closer to Severn than to Albany. However, the company did not embark upon settlements inland from Severn. Because of the inland trading infrastructure that had already been developed, Albany was better poised to expand into the Severn hinterland to check the Canadian traders there.

Plans were also formulated to extend Albany's chain of inland settlements to the Lac Seul area and beyond. Goodwin initially recommended that Best be sent to the "Fire Country[33] by way of Upissinguga [Lac Seul] and Mr. Beaugrand with the Canadians to the Trout Lake [present Trout Lake near Red Lake]" (HBCA, B.3/b/26, fo. 11). Jarvis approved these plans but he stressed that the Canadian servants were not to be trusted by themselves. He wrote to Goodwin that "your proposal you make at the same time of sending Mr. Beaugrand & Canadians alone to Trout Lake is totally inadmissable as I repeat it they must be mixt" (HBCA, B.3/b/26, fo. 24). The Trout Lake spoken of in this correspondence was known only from Indian reports, and Jarvis had received information that it was 500 miles from Osnaburgh. John Best had also heard of this lake and the bad reputation of the Indians who lived there. There were rumours that these Indians frequently killed Canadian traders. Jarvis became so intrigued with Trout Lake that he wanted Best to build a settlement there the next season, reasoning that "the only way to prevent the Canadians from hurting the Honble Company's trade, is to seat ourselves in or near their posts" (HBCA, B.3/b/26, fo. 68). Best was prevented from going to Trout Lake because he was needed at Cat Lake to oppose the Canadians during the 1789-90 season. But the vaguely known Trout Lake area persisted as a target for Albany's inland expansion.

During the 1789-90 season at Cat Lake, Best was opposed by an experienced trader named "Chavoderi" (Chavaudrille) who arrived with ten men and two large canoes and built his house thirty yards from the HBC house. Chavaudrille was described as a middle-aged man who had been trading for twenty-eight years, mainly in the "Missipy Country" (HBCA, B.155/a/4, fo. 4d). Tupa, who had previously traded at Cat Lake, had taken two large canoes of men and goods to a post on "Lake Saul or Upishingungo Lake" (Lac Seul), Duncan Cameron with two canoes went to "red paint lake" (Red Lake), "Maukay" (John McKay) was at a house on "Lake St. Anns" (Lake Nipigon), and another "Maukay" (Donald McKay) was trading at Sturgeon Lake. Chavaudrille's experience and the number of other Canadian posts nearby made the fur trade very difficult for Best. The Cat Lake post was the first Albany establishment to experience competition at such close quarters, and

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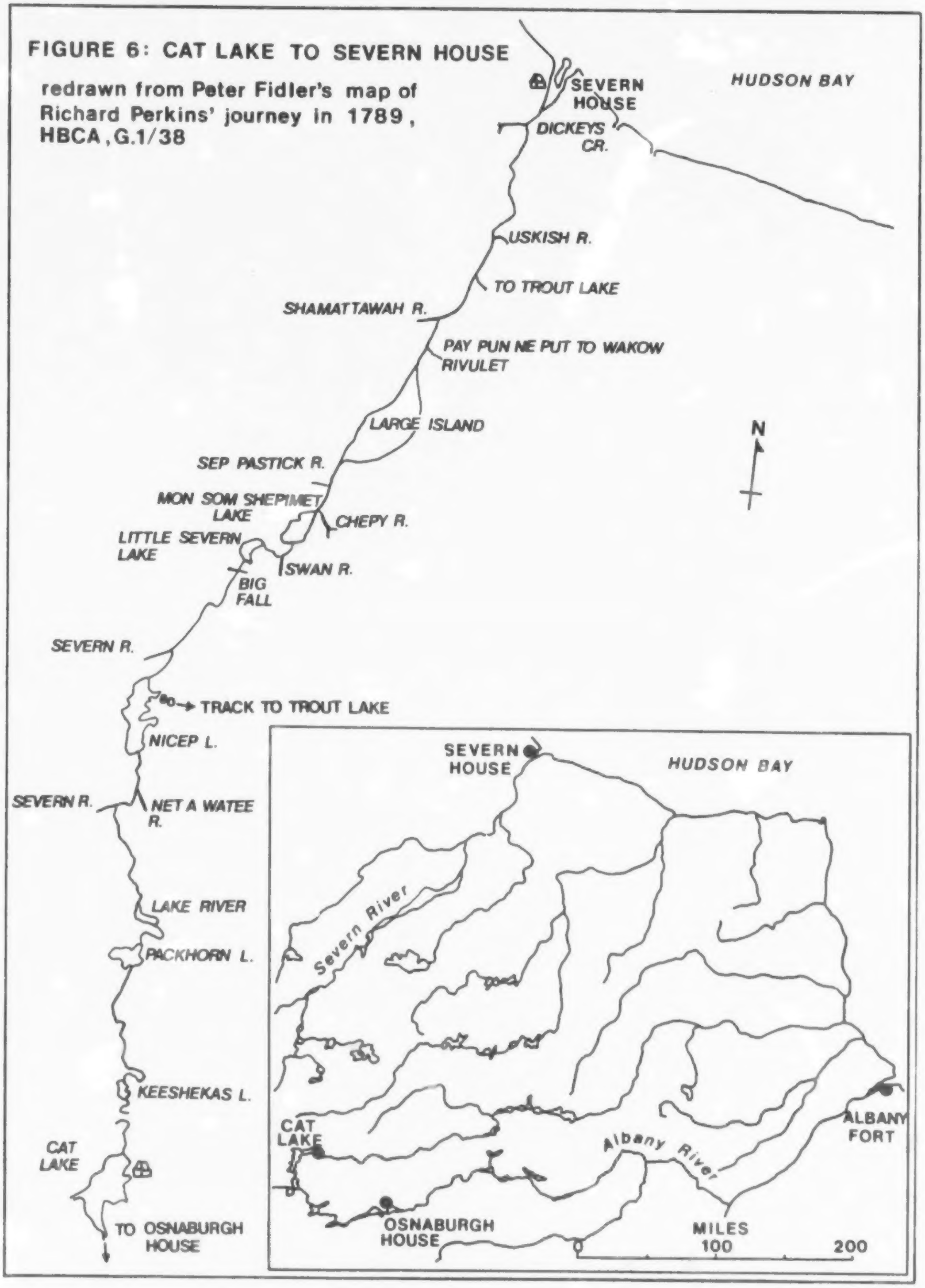
[33] The term fire country in early HBC documents was usually a reference to the prairies. It seems that the prairie grasslands were often set on fire by the Indians to conceal war parties and thus the name fire country was applied to this region. In the 1780s the HBC men at Albany did not know the precise geographical location of the prairies, and the term fire country was sometimes applied to areas within the boreal forest.

FIGURE 6: CAT LAKE TO SEVERN HOUSE

redrawn from Peter Fidler's map of Richard Perkins' journey in 1789, HBCA, G.1/38


SEVERN HOUSE
HUDSON BAY
DICKEYS CR.
USKISH R.
TO TROUT LAKE
SHAMATTAWAH R.
PAY PUN NE PUT TO WAKOW RIVULET
LARGE ISLAND
N
SEP PASTICK R.
MON SOM SHEPIMET LAKE
CHEPY R.
LITTLE SEVERN LAKE
SWAN R.
BIG FALL
SEVERN R.
TRACK TO TROUT LAKE
NICEP L.
SEVERN R.
NET A WATEE R.
LAKE RIVER
PACKHORN L.
KEESHEKAS L.
CAT LAKE
TO OSNABURGH HOUSE
SEVERN HOUSE
HUDSON BAY
Severn River
CAT LAKE
Albany River
ALBANY FORT
OSNABURGH HOUSE
MILES
0
100
200

during the winter several confrontations between the opposing traders bordered on violence. The Indians of Cat Lake revelled in this situation and increasingly demanded large presents of liquor before they would trade their furs. On 20 October 1789, for example, Best wrote, "Chavoderi gave the Captn that went to him 4 gallons of Brandy and I gave the other 5 gallons - he shall not out strip me if I can help it" (HBCA, B.30/a/2, fo. 9d).

By 1790, the Albany traders were ready to extend their system of trading posts beyond the Albany River basin and into the Lac Seul region which had riverine connections with Lake Winnipeg. James Sutherland, the man who had made the first explorations of Lac Seul in 1786, was placed in charge of fourteen men and was given two batteaux and a small canoe to establish a post at Lac Seul. Sutherland's party was escorted by Goodwin, Best, and six other men as far as the Canadian path in Lake St. Joseph, and from there they followed Sutherland's previous route to Lac Seul. When they reached the long portage over the height of land, the Albany men set to work constructing a rollered track for the batteaux containing 436 logs over a distance of 810 yards,[34] a technique that was to greatly facilitate penetration inland from Albany by batteaux. Upon entering Lac Seul, Sutherland found it necessary to engage two Indian guides to pilot them through the large lake which was filled with many islands and deceptive bays. After two days of rowing through the lake, they reached the Canadian trading post and found Tupa in charge. Sutherland had initially intended to build his house beside Tupa's, but after viewing that particular place he decided to proceed farther inland to Red Lake, where Tupa's superior, Duncan Cameron, had his house.

Duncan Cameron was employed by Cotté and Shaw as a clerk in charge of the Red Lake post, but he soon rose to become the chief wintering officer in the region. With the retirement of Alexander Shaw from inland service about 1791, Duncan Cameron assumed the role of chief winterer for the Cotté-Shaw partnership (Duckworth 1985:5). By 1790, Cameron had a well established trade in the Red Lake area. When James Sutherland first met Cameron on 6 October 1790 he was impressed by Cameron's outward appearance: "he was dres't fit to appear at Court his men likewise very Genteel, had a large beautiful flag, I was ashamed to hoist mine being an old dirty thing which is a shame to the service" (HBCA, B.177/a/1, fo. 10). This impression was fortified the next day when Cameron prepared dinner for his HBC rival. Treated royally, Sutherland was made painfully aware of the abundant resources of his opponent:

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[34] This portage was traversed by Thomas Fawcett in his survey of the region in 1885. He offered the following interesting remarks about the history of the portage: "Root or Route River is said by some to derive its name from the rooty portage which connects it with Lake St. Joseph, and by others on account of its being part of the old canoe route from Fort Albany on James' Bay to Lac Seul, and points west. It was formerly a stream of some importance, when used for purposes of navigation, but for a number of years has not been travelled except occasionally by Indians in passing between the two large lakes" (Fawcett 1886:34).

> to my great surprise found entertainment suitable for any gentleman, boiled Beef, Pork, Beaver, Portugal splet peas made into fine soup, fat Cake, Chocolate, and very good wine; his table cover'd with clean linen with every thing suitable there to as he carries a large kanteen and two chests with his cloathes (HBCA, B.177/a/1, fo. 10d).

In contrast, Sutherland dolefully admitted, "when I invite him to dine with me I have not so much as a knife and a fork for him and my self and but one plate" (HBCA, B.177/a/1, fo. 10d).

Sutherland had arrived at Red Lake three weeks earlier than Cameron, and had built his house on a large bay in the lake. The trading post measured thirty-eight feet by eighteen feet, and was divided into the master's room, the men's room, and the trading room (see fig. 7). Cameron's previous post was situated at the foot of the lake, so he decided to abandon it and build a new one about one hundred yards above the HBC post. Despite an intensely competitive trading season the two men developed a strong friendship. Cameron was well respected by the Red Lake Indians and also had the advantage of a large supply of goods from the Lac Seul post, which acted as a depot for the inland posts. His men were much more adept at trading and working than Sutherland's, causing his HBC rival to draw further comparisons unfavourable to his own company: "I never saw such unaquainted hands in this country as I have got.... I am afraid to trust them out of Doors for fear of losing themselves" (HBCA, B.177/a/1, fo. 17).

Cameron himself was well acquainted with the necessary skills of wilderness survival and, during the winter, he generously assisted Sutherland by making several pairs of snowshoes, an art that neither Sutherland nor his men understood (HBCA, B.177/a/1, fo. 19d). Five years of inland trading experience had also given Cameron a better understanding of Northern Algonquian tastes and preferences. He placed great emphasis on his outward appearance and, besides the elegant flag, he possessed a large brass blunderbuss which was fired ceremoniously whenever Indians approached his house. He was also generous in giving large presents of rum and tobacco to the Indians. Sutherland found that Cameron's stock of these two articles, as Best had noted previously at Cat Lake, was superior to the HBC's stock:[35]

> his Rum is of the best Jameca Spirits and is much prefered by the Indians to our English Brandy.... My tobacco is also very bad Mr. Cameron has very good Brazil tobacco as also a

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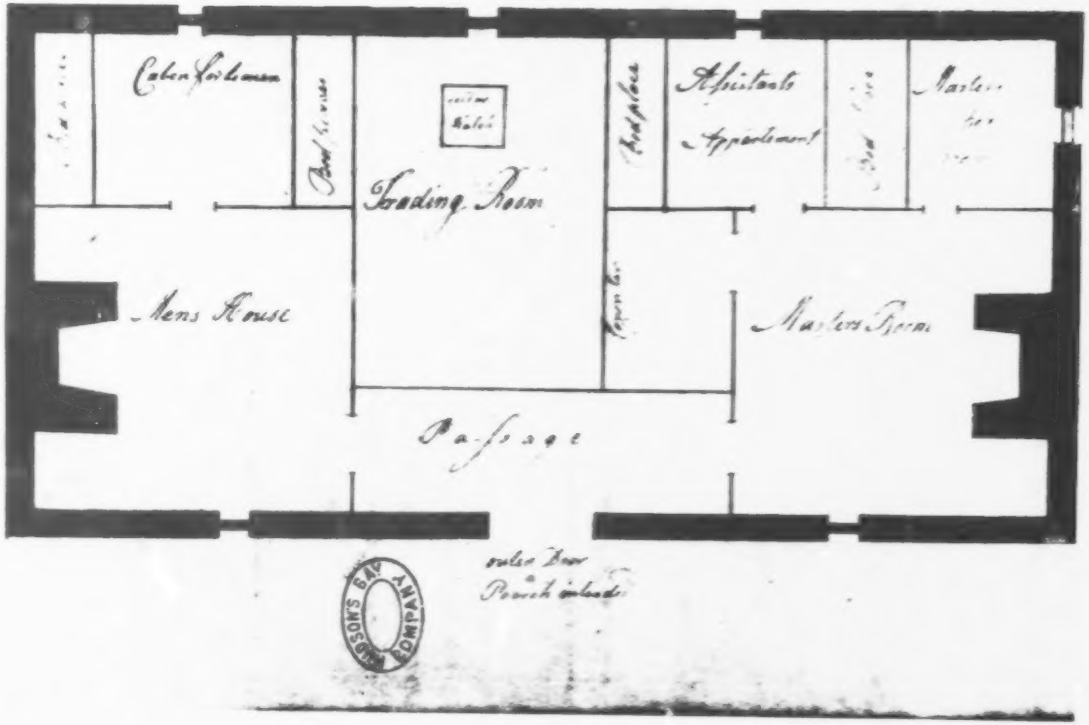
[35] The Hudson's Bay Company responded to this situation in part by supplying Albany Fort with Spencer's Twist tobacco beginning in the 1797 trading season (HBCA, B.3/d/109).

FIGURE 7: JAMES SUTHERLAND'S PLAN OF RED LAKE HOUSE, 1790


Cabin for Women
Trading Room
Bedplace
Assistants Appartment
Mens House
Masters Room
Passage
outer Door

SOURCE : HBCA , B. 177/a/1

> very good kind manufactured in London called Spencer's Twist which the Indians in this part of the country are very fond of (HBCA, B.177/a/1, fo. 15d, 22).

Despite Cameron's many advantages, Sutherland was able to procure a substantial trade. His fur returns amounted to 2,445 made beaver, of which sixty-three percent was composed of beaver pelts (HBCA, B.3/d/101, fo. 49). Sutherland had also proven at last that batteaux could be transported over the height of land and that Albany men, regardless of their inexperience, could profitably compete with the Canadians (see also Smith 1975).

While Sutherland pioneered the trade for the Hudson's Bay Company at Red Lake, Best once again wintered at Cat Lake. Although the post had been settled for two years, he was forced to hire as guide, "Peter Bono" (Pierre Bonneau), the old independent Canadian trader. By the time the HBC men reached Cat Lake, Cameron's men, under the leadership of Jean-Baptiste Turcot (possibly Turcotte, but also spelled Turko, Turcott, and Tiercot), had already begun trading with the Indians. Besides arriving at Cat Lake late in the fall of 1790, Best suffered the embarrassment of realizing that, once he had unloaded the batteaux, he had no person capable of taking the extra men back to Osnaburgh. His only recourse was to engage one of Turcot's men, who agreed to act as their guide.

By this time the hiring of Canadians was no longer viewed with suspicion by the Albany traders. Indeed, it was considered highly desirable if not necessary at this juncture if the Hudson's Bay Company was to keep pace with Cotté and Shaw in the Little North. The company officially supported the engagement of experienced Canadians in its service, and the Albany officers, in contrast to those at the other coastal forts, were actively encouraged to do so.[36] In the summer of 1791, four Canadians deserted to the Albany service: the two McKays, John and Donald (apparently not related), George Knowles, and Jean-Baptiste Turcot. Goodwin rated Turcot as, "the most proper person I have seen yet for trade," and reported, "it would be a shame to permit him to come back for the Canadian merchants by these vigorous measures I hope to root the Canadian Traders out of ye Country" (HBCA, B.155/a/5, fo. 21d).

Turcot agreed to join the Hudson's Bay Company at an annual salary of fifty pounds (HBCA, B.155/a/5, fo. 21d). Prior to his engagement, however, he had to take his load of furs to Lake Nipigon where he was to meet Alexander Shaw. Although Turcot was initially the most highly regarded of the three Canadians, it was the McKays who would have the greatest impact on the Hudson's Bay Company's development. John McKay had been in charge of the post on Lake Nipigon, and it was Jarvis's intention to employ him in 1791 as HBC trader on that lake. Not only would the trade in furs be beneficial to the company, but a post on Lake Nipigon would also serve to watch the movements of Canadians who entered the Little North. Jarvis had another motive for sending John McKay to Lake Nipigon. He felt that a HBC post on Lake Nipigon would help to ease the tension between the Indians who lived there and those who lived near the Albany River. John Hodgson, the HBC master at Henley House, wrote to Jarvis on 25 May 1791 that the "general dislike to the St. Anns [Lake Nipigon] Indians which is among these in Albany River is difficult to be got over" (HBCA, B.3/b/28, fo. 31d). According to Jarvis, there would be "much advantage to the Company's service if by his [John McKay's] means we can overcome the dislike the Indians of that Quarter [Henley House] have to the Suckers and Waucers" (ibid., fo. 30).[37]

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[36] This policy was maintained at Albany until at least 1800. In 1794 the following was written in the Albany Fort Correspondence: "the Hounourabel Committee have once again given liberty to their officers to engage Canadians in their service who are free so to do" (HBCA, B.3/b/31, fo. 31).

Donald McKay had apparently been "in trade for himself," and was not associated with Cotté and Shaw (HBCA, B.3/b/28, fo. 13d). He had traded in the "Grand North" and possessed considerable knowledge about the fur trade near Rainy Lake and Lake of the Woods. He proposed to establish a number of posts for the Hudson's Bay Company along the route from Grand Portage to Lake Winnipeg. The first was Portage de l'Isle on the Winnipeg River "which produces 1000 Beaver, and there is plenty of fish and some meat to be had here." The next place was Lake of the Woods "where canoes is to be purchased." Most importantly, McKay advocated building a post on the Rainy River or Rainy Lake. A post here would likely produce "3600 Beaver every year, likewise canoes, as many as can be wanted, besides it distresses the N. West Company and cuts their communication with the interior country" (HBCA, A.11/5, fo. 124). The engagement of John and Donald McKay thus promised to extend the HBC trade along the southern front of the Little North beyond the Hudson Bay drainage basin and thus outside the confines of Rupert's Land.

By 1791, the fur trade in the Little North had expanded westward from Nipigon and Albany to the height of land that bounded the East Winnipeg's drainage. Both the Hudson's Bay Company and the Canadians had settled trading posts at two points on the eastern side of the divide, at Red Lake in the English/Winnipeg River drainage basin and at Cat Lake in the Albany River basin, and were thus poised to penetrate the East Winnipeg Country from the headwater region. For the Albany men these advances were made possible by using flat-bottomed batteaux; and for the Canadians from Nipigon, large canoes facilitated the movement of men, supplies, and trade goods through the complex topography leading to the Lake Winnipeg watershed.

The two-pronged advances toward East Winnipeg can be seen clearly in figure 8. This western frontier of the trade in the Little North comprised a region in which furs, and especially beaver, were abundant. In addition, further expansion westward to Lake Winnipeg and beyond by the Albany men could be provisioned by larger quantities of wild rice and, eventually, with pemmican supplied from the prairies.

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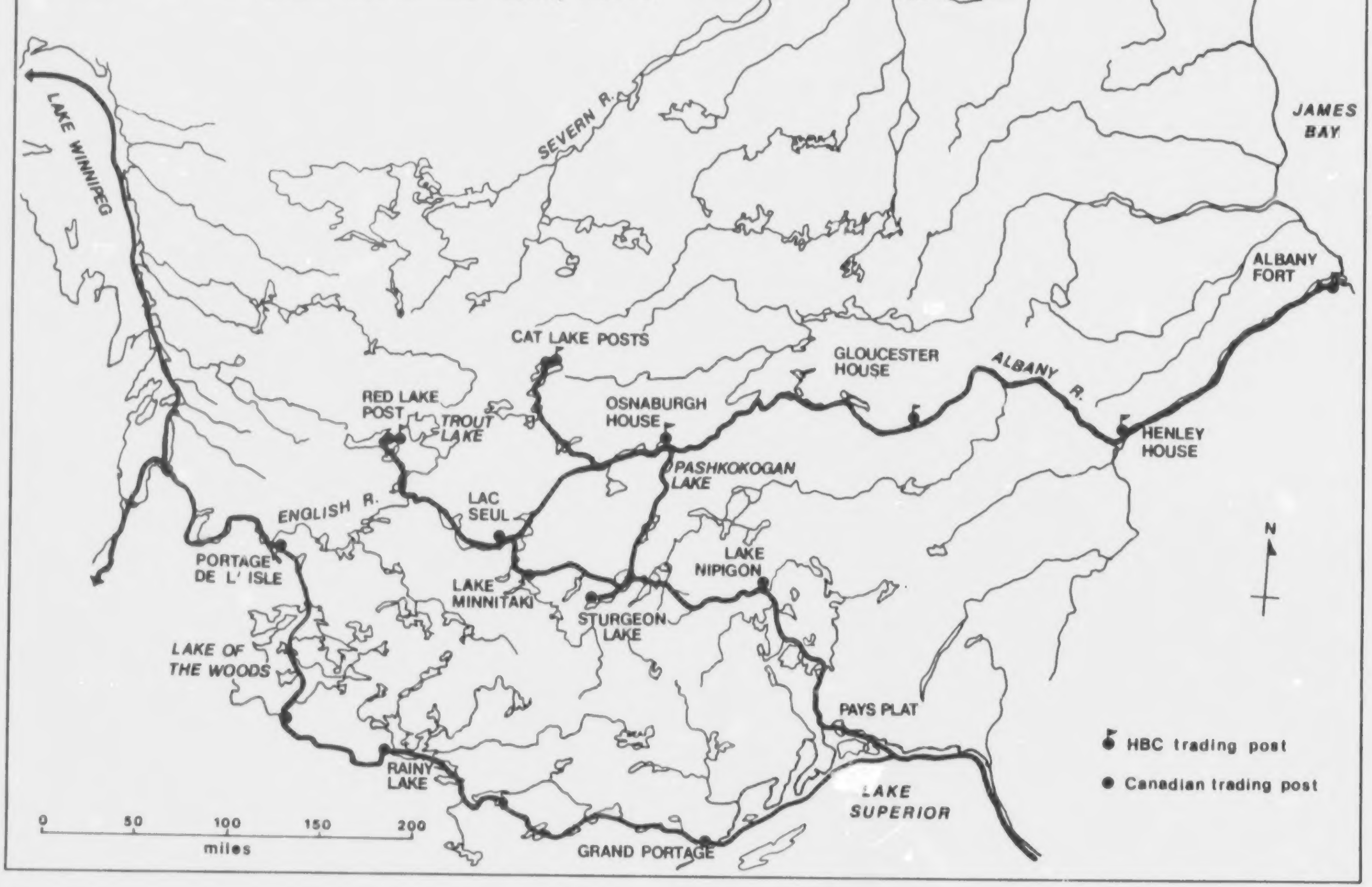
[37] The terms Suckers and Waucers refer to local or clan groups of the Ojibwa. See chapter 2, note 15.

The Albany inland trade was patterned in many respects after that carried inland by the Canadians from Nipigon; and indeed, its success appears to have been predicated upon adaptations of the Montrealers' techniques. The HBC inland posts were initially constructed in the "Canadian manner," being structures that could be quickly and easily built in the wilderness of the shield. Albany's inland officers also generally followed the flexible standard of trade set by their counterparts from Nipigon. Additionally, the policy of hiring experienced Canadian voyageurs and clerks greatly enabled the Albany expansion to keep pace. Engaging these men instantly provided the Albany inland movement with valuable experience that many of the company's servants lacked.

FIGURE 8: FUR TRADE ROUTES AND POSTS, 1790 - 91


LAKE WINNIPEG
SEVERN R.
JAMES BAY
ALBANY FORT
CAT LAKE POSTS
GLOUCESTER HOUSE
ALBANY R.
RED LAKE POST
TROUT LAKE
OSNABURGH HOUSE
HENLEY HOUSE
PASHKOKOGAN LAKE
ENGLISH R.
LAC SEUL
PORTAGE DE L' ISLE
LAKE MINNITAKI
LAKE NIPIGON
STURGEON LAKE
LAKE OF THE WOODS
PAYS PLAT
RAINY LAKE
LAKE SUPERIOR
GRAND PORTAGE
N
HBC trading post
Canadian trading post
0
50
100
150
200
miles

Chapter V

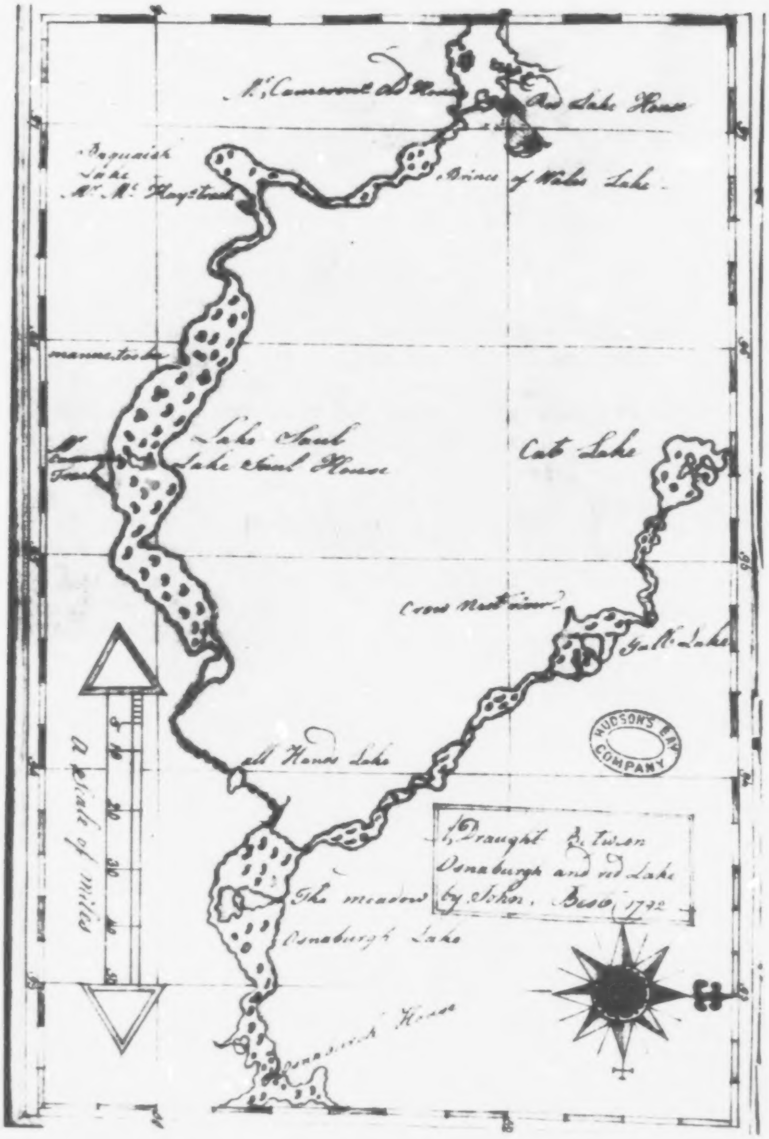
AT THE WATERSHED: THE FUR TRADERS REACH THE MARGINS OF THE LAKE WINNIPEG BASIN, 1791-96

At the end of the 1790-91 trading season Duncan Cameron was ready to expand his trade west of Red Lake and build posts in the East Winnipeg Country. The man chosen to lead the expedition was Jean-Baptiste Rousette, who had been in charge of a trading post on Sturgeon Lake in 1790-91. Rousette had little choice in the matter since he was in debt to Cameron for the value of his trading outfit for the previous year. This had come about because Rousette had a very poor year at Sturgeon Lake, and his fur returns did not match the value of the trade goods he had purchased from Cameron (HBCA, B.177/a/1, fos. 29, 31). Rousette's destination in the summer of 1791 was Bad Lake on the upper reaches of the Bloodvein River. The exact location of Bad Lake is uncertain, but it may have been present Larus, Murdock, or Knox Lake. Rousette took six men and trading goods in a large canoe, and spent the summer at Bad Lake.

In the fall of 1791 the Albany men returned to Red Lake with two batteaux, this time led by John Best (James Sutherland spent the winter at Gloucester House). Duncan Cameron also returned to Red Lake on 13 October 1791, with one small and two large canoes (see fig. 9). His late arrival prevented him from sending an additional outfit to Bad Lake, and it seems that post was abandoned for the year. The relationship between the two opposing traders was not nearly as amicable as that shared by Cameron and Sutherland the previous year. The desertion of John McKay, Jean-Baptiste Turcot, and George Knowles may have prompted a much more antagonistic demeanour on Cameron's part. The winter of 1791-92 at Red Lake was also marked by threats and intimidation over the Indian trade. During one such incident, Best remarked, "Mr. Cameron and me was almost gone to war about the [Indians] debts" (HBCA, B.177/a/2, fo. 12d). In the spring both sent parties to Paquash Lake to intercept Indian traders coming from that quarter. The intense competition at Red Lake was a harbinger of the rivalry that would develop in the ensuing years throughout most of the Little North.

The Albany inland trade in 1791-92 was launched with expectations of great returns. In addition to the large outfit sent to Red Lake, Jean-Baptiste Turcot built a post on Lac Seul and Donald McKay made an exploratory journey to Lake of the Woods. Turcot's engagement with the Hudson's Bay Company prompted several letters to be written by men who questioned his sincerity (HBCA, B.3/b/28, fo. 17). It was learned that he was in debt to Alexander Shaw for 7,000 livres, and Jean-Baptiste La Roche (now with the Hudson's Bay Company) for 1,000

FIGURE 9: JOHN BEST'S SKETCH MAP, 1792


Mr. Cameron's Old House
Red Lake House
Pequaiah Lake
Mr. Mc Kay's track
Prince of Wales Lake
mannetoba
Mr
Track
Lake Seul
Lake Seul House
Cat Lake
Crow Nest river
Gull Lake
all Hands Lake
A Draught Between Osnaburgh and red Lake by John. Best 1792
The meadow
Osnaburgh Lake
Osnaburgh House
A scale of miles
5
10
20
30
40
50
HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY

SOURCE : HBCA, B.177/a/2

livres. Although he apparently cleared these debts in the summer of 1791, many of the Albany men still regarded him with suspicion. Turcot's actions at Lac Seul did nothing to endear him to the company. He procured a very poor trade of 472 made beaver and made little effort to compete with Cameron's post (which was in charge of a clerk named Mr. Bellair). In fact, he signed an agreement with Cameron to share the furs equally at Lac Seul (HBCA, B.155/a/6, fo. 7). Turcot left the HBC service in the spring of 1792, without reporting to Jarvis at Albany Fort. Adding to the intrigue of the situation, Turcot was back in the fall with a load of trade goods bearing the Cotté-Shaw mark.

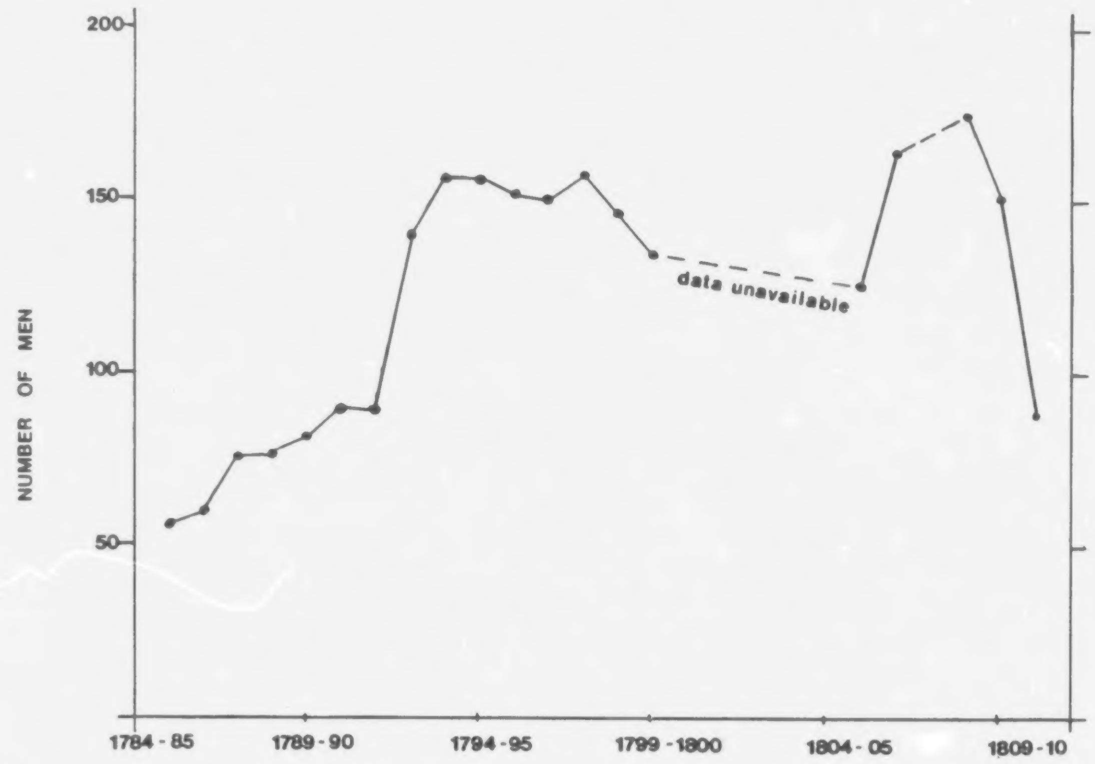
Donald McKay left Osnaburgh House on 8 September 1791 in a large canoe with four men on his journey to Lake of the Woods. It was an exploratory mission intended to mark out a site for a future trading post and spread the news on HBC plans among the Indians of that area. He reached Lake of the Woods on the first of October, and found the Indians there generally receptive to a HBC post on the lake and willing to make large birchbark canoes for the company. After a short exploration of the lake the party hastened back to Osnaburgh before the freeze-up. McKay, unlike Turcot, had demonstrated his usefulness and dedication to the company with this brief expedition.

The summer of 1792 was a busy one at Albany Fort. The ship from Britain brought out a large number of new recruits, and Albany's labour force increased from eighty-nine in 1791-92 to 140 for the 1792-93 season (see fig. 10). This signalled the beginning of a great push inland by the Albany traders as the Hudson's Bay Company sought to compete on a more equal footing with its rival Montreal traders.

Jean-Baptiste Turcot's return in the fall of 1792 as a competing trader was not unexpected, but it did cause some alarm for the Albany inland men. He was in charge of a party that consisted of three large canoes which passed by Osnaburgh House on 15 August 1792. He was accompanied by an assistant named "Pomerville" (Jean-Baptiste Pomainville) who built a post on Crow Nest Lake (present Springpole Lake on the upper Albany River). Turcot continued northward to Cat Lake where he wintered in opposition to Edward Clouston of the Hudson's Bay Company. Clouston was outnumbered three to one by Turcot's men, but still managed to procure a respectable trade amounting to 1,013 made beaver (HBCA, B.3/d/103, fo. 46). Turcot was not satisfied with his share of the Cat Lake trade which amounted to nineteen packs (of approximately ninety pounds each), and made plans to build another post farther north. Thus, in the spring of 1793, he sent a party of men with a large canoe toward Sand Lake (present Sandy Lake) at the headwaters of the Severn River.

Expansion into East Winnipeg also occurred in the Red Lake quarter during the 1792-93 season. Again it was Cameron and his men who took the initiative and sent a large outfit to Bad Lake on the Bloodvein River. John Best who was in charge of the HBC post on Red Lake realized that he had to build alongside Cameron's men at Bad Lake or risk losing much in the 1792-93 trading season. Best's attempts to

FIGURE 10: ALBANY FORT LABOUR FORCE 1785 - 1811
(INCLUDES ALL INLAND DISTRICTS)



SOURCES: HBCA, B.3/d/94 - 125

organize an expedition met with initial failure as many of his men refused to go. Simon Beaugrand, the former Canadian trader and Best's assistant at Red Lake, volunteered to lead the party. Best and Beaugrand were forced to offer forty shillings apiece to three men (Donald Thomson, John Scarth, and John Valiant) who agreed to winter at Bad Lake (HBCA, B.177/a/3, fo. 2d). The cash incentive was offered because Best and Beaugrand both realized that their premium on the fur returns at Red Lake would be damaged by Cameron's post at Bad Lake. Beaugrand and his men reached Bad Lake in a large canoe, but the HBC post had little success against Cameron's men who were led by Jean-Baptiste Rousette. Beaugrand had difficulty in managing the post because he could speak little English, and his men understood even less French. In the end Beaugrand was able to secure only nine small packs of furs, while Rousette traded sixteen packs (HBCA, B.177/a/3, fo. 13).

To the southwest of Red Lake, the trade of the English and Winnipeg Rivers was still the preserve of the Canadian traders. In the fall of 1792 James Sutherland was ordered to build a post along this route for the Hudson's Bay Company. Sutherland left Osnaburgh House with eight men in two batteaux and a large canoe on 15 August 1792. One month later they arrived at Kis ka bitchewan Fall (commonly called Escabitchewan and later named Maynard Falls), and built a trading post "in the Canadian manner" (HBCA, B.64/a/1, fo. 5d). The waterfall was described as a "very bad one" by Sutherland, who also noted that George Knowles had once wintered there (ibid., fo. 4d). The name Escabitchewan was an Ojibwa word meaning "high and low water," and was descriptive of the current at the bottom of the waterfall which ran round in a circle causing a constant ebb and flow of about three feet (Fawcett 1886:32).[38] Sutherland and his men portaged around the waterfall and built their post on the shore of present Tide Lake.[39] Sutherland soon learned that the terms of trade at Escabitchewan were different from that experienced at other Albany inland posts. The Indians who lived in the vicinity were especially difficult to deal with, and they demanded large presents before they traded their furs. Sutherland complained that he "never was so tormented with Indians," and contrasted his situation with other Albany posts: "clearly do they earn their bread that deals with Indians Inland, whilst those in the lower Settlements [Albany Fort, Henley House, etc.] has not the least trouble having good Houses and surrounded with Pallisades to keep them from drunken Indians" (HBCA, B.64/a/1, fo. 5d). His difficulty with the Escabitchewan Indians was directly related to the number of competing posts in the area. Sutherland counted seven posts within 100 miles of him. Escabitchewan was situated close to the main canoe route from Grand Portage to Lake Winnipeg, and posts were built along this route to serve as centres of canoe-building, wild rice storage, and fur trading. Despite the substantial competition in the area, however, Sutherland made an excellent trade of twenty-seven packs of furs valued at 2,302 made beaver (HBCA, B.3/d/103, fo. 52).

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[38] When Thomas Fawcett made an exploratory survey of the English River in the summer of 1885 he reported that sturgeon of large size were frequently taken at the foot of "Esquabatchewan" falls. He described the falls as "dangerous, and is seldom crossed by the Indians, as there are two other portages which may be taken [to get around the falls]" (Fawcett 1886:32).

[39] In 1795 the post was moved downriver to Wepinaban (present Ball Lake). It was closed in 1810, but reopened in 1818 at Escabitchewan.

The Albany inland trade in 1792-93 was further bolstered by the establishment of a post on Lake Nipigon. The post was built by John McKay, who had earlier traded on the same lake for Cotté and Shaw. McKay arrived at Lake Nipigon on 14 September 1793 with two batteaux and one canoe. It was the last time that the journey would be made with batteaux, as the route was difficult and birchbark canoes were easy to obtain at Lake Nipigon. McKay found that his old post had been taken over by "Chauvaundry" (Chavaudrille), a trader for Cotté and Shaw (Chavaudrille had operated the Canadian post on Cat Lake in 1789-80 and 1791-92). McKay built his post right beside his former station which was situated on the northeast part of the lake, possibly on Ombabika Bay. The following year (1793-94) a new HBC post was built across the lake on Wabinosh Bay, and this became the regular winter post in years to come. The post on Lake Nipigon was intended to provide the company with furs, large canoes, and information on the Canadian traders. In its first year, the men at the post performed all three functions. They collected 572 made beaver in furs (HBCA, B.3/d/103, fo.55), obtained several canoes, and reported on the movements of the Canadians. In addition to Chavaudrille at Lake Nipigon, these included "Bellown" (possibly Bellair) at a post forty miles away, and James Hudson who passed to the north during the fall of 1792 (HBCA, B.149/a/1, fo. 6).

James Hudson had been formerly employed with the Hudson's Bay Company at Albany Fort as a writer, and had spent one year at Osnaburgh House. Hudson left the company in 1791, returning to England where he apparently engaged with the London firm of Phyn, Ellice and Inglis (Duckworth 1985:7). He was sent to Montreal where he was employed with a subsidiary firm, Forsyth, Richardson and Company. The Montreal company had earlier interests in the fur trade southwest of Lake Superior, but in the 1790s it turned its attention increasingly to the north when it became clear that the United States would lay claim to the region south of Lake Superior (Wallace 1954:57). Hudson was selected by Forsyth, Richardson and Company to establish a trading post in the Little North. He was placed in charge of a large party that included thirteen men in three large canoes. His assistant was the experienced James Clark who guided the party to Lake St. Joseph where they built their post about two miles above Osnaburgh House. However, this new threat to both the Hudson's Bay Company and the Cotté-Shaw partnership was defused by the accidental death of Hudson during the month of December 1792. Clark and the rest of the men passed the remainder of the winter in idleness, and returned to Montreal without a single pack of furs (Duckworth 1985:7). Hudson's ill-fated venture into the Little North for Forsyth, Richardson foreshadowed events that would shortly involve the North West Company.

James Sutherland continued to pioneer the Albany trade along the English River in the 1793-94 season. His destination in the fall of 1793 was Portage de l'Isle on the Winnipeg River just above its confluence with the English River. He arrived there on 9 September 1793 with ten men in two batteaux and one canoe. He soon found the Canadian post, and built the HBC post on a nearby bay. The Canadians arrived two weeks later in four large canoes. The post at Portage de l'Isle was placed in the charge of "Mr. La Tower" (Latour), while three canoes under "Mr. Frederick [Shultz?]" continued on to "River de Papino or Pabino" (present Pembina River) (HBCA, B.166/a/1, fo. 5). Latour had been trading at Portage de l'Isle for six years under the employ of "Mr. Gregory" (John Gregory). He was thus a North West Company trader since the firm of Gregory-McLeod had merged with the North West Company in 1787 (Campbell 1983:391). Other Nor'Westers wintered nearby at Rainy Lake, Eagle Lake, and Bas de la Rivière Ouinipique (Bottom of Winnipeg River). The last post was under the charge of Toussaint Lesieur, and it became a principal depot of the North West Company.

Sutherland and Latour spent the winter of 1793-94 in competition that ranged from cordial dinner engagements to loud disagreements over the Indian trade. Latour had been in the trade for many years as had his father before him (HBCA, B.166/a/1, fo. 17). He was accompanied by his Indian wife and family. During the winter his wife gave birth to a girl, and in the spring his son James, aged three years, was "baptized" by Sutherland (ibid., fo. 23d). Latour displayed a raging temper, and several times beat his men severely. Sutherland noted that Duncan Cameron had told him that Latour "is lookt on by all the Canadians as a near Madman" (ibid., fo. 17). Between Latour's fits of madness the two traders got along surprisingly well. Latour even inquired about joining the HBC service, but gave up the idea when he learned that the most he could expect to earn was fifty pounds per year. He told Sutherland that guides and interpreters in the North West Company made comparable wages, while he was paid 2,005 livres (about 85 pounds sterling) plus his equipment free of charge (ibid., fo. 11).

In addition to Sutherland's post at Portage de l'Isle, the Albany men pressed forward dramatically on two other fronts that took them deeper into the realm of the North West Company. Trading posts were established in 1793 on the Assiniboine and Rainy Rivers. Beside being of value for their furs, the regions around these posts were important for their supplies of pemmican and large birchbark canoes respectively. The post of the Assiniboine near the junction with the Souris River was named Brandon House. It was founded by Donald McKay and twenty men who reached the site in three batteaux and two large canoes. The Albany men continued to be active in this area until 1810, at which point the Hudson's Bay Company shifted the responsibility for Brandon to its traders from York Factory. The Albany presence in the Rainy River region lasted only until 1797 when the company withdrew because of ruinous competition with the North West Company.

In the fall of 1793 Cameron's traders channelled their efforts into expanding their trade on the Red Lake and Cat Lake frontiers. Turcot, who was in charge of the latter, proceeded in 1793 to move north of Cat Lake toward the Severn River drainage basin. The Albany men had heard of a large lake in that direction called Sand Lake (present Sandy Lake), and presumed that Turcot's post was there. However, they learned that Turcot had not reached Sandy Lake, but had settled on a lake about half-way called Messu-sack assigan or the Great Lake (present MacDowell Lake) (HBCA, B.3/b/31, fo. 18). The Albany outfit for Cat Lake that season was pitifully small, being made up of Clouston and three men. As Clouston remarked, "I am sorry it is not in my power to follow them [the Canadians] as there is neither men nor provisions" (HBCA, B.30/a/5, fo. 1d). During the winter he sent a small trading party under David Michael toward Great Lake but Michael was unable to reach this destination: "The road is so bad they cannot haul provisions and trading goods sufficient to make anything" (ibid., fo. 8d). As a result, Clouston's trade that season dropped considerably, to only 840 made beaver, while Turcot returned from Great Lake with fourteen packs of furs (HBCA, B.3/d/104, fo. 46; B.30/a/5, fo. 20d).

In addition to Turcot, who had blockaded the Indian hunters from the north, several Canadian traders had settled on Lake Winnipeg and were drawing the Indians westward to that quarter. These men were probably North West Company traders from Grand Portage who had begun to establish posts along the east coast of Lake Winnipeg. An Indian from Lake Winnipeg said that there were no fewer than four traders on the lake. He also informed Clouston that his country was only "five days march with their small canoes" (HBCA, B.30/a/5, fo. 19d). Clouston petitioned for an opportunity to "send a large canoe and goods for a trial" (ibid., fo. 19d), but sufficient men, goods, and canoes were unavailable for this task.

In the Red Lake quarter, the Canadians from Nipigon were also expanding into new territory, while reducing the fur returns of Albany's Red Lake House. Cameron had established a second post at the mouth of the Bloodvein River and its presence, together with the Bad Lake post, served to divert many Indians from visiting Best at Red Lake. Albany's lack of large canoes prevented Best from outfitting an outpost for Bad Lake in the 1793-94 season and his trade fell to only 1,263 made beaver (HBCA, B.3/d/104, fo. 49). During the winter he wrote, "what trade is got now it most be done by strength" (HBCA, B.177/a/4, fo.11).

In 1794, the veteran Albany trader, explorer, and commander of the inland boat brigades, David Sanderson, was appointed master of Cat Lake House. His appearance on this frontier of the Albany trade ushered in a period of vigorous competition. Along with Sanderson came his four native-born sons, John, David Jr., Thomas, and James, whose wilderness skills and abilities to communicate with the Indians made the Albany outfit comparable in experience to any that the Canadians could muster.

Sanderson immediately perceived the need to expand beyond Cat Lake and settle beside the Canadian traders above him in the Severn drainage. He described the situation to James Sutherland at Osnaburgh:

> The Canadians all went up with Turko [Turcot] in the summer he put up at great lake [MacDowell Lake] and Allan M Farling [McFarlane] at Eagle Lake [probably on Berens River] is stopt all the Indians fo come down there is poor prospect of trade hir this year as there has not a Indian been hir from Winipick nor, I dont expect to see any from that part as they must pass threw great lake (HBCA, B.3/b/31, fo. 18).

He also indicated that it was impossible to follow them since he lacked suitable canoes to move his men and goods through the headwater region.

At Red Lake, Best realized that it was essential to build alongside the Nor'Westers on the lower reaches of the Bloodvein River. In the summer of 1794, he left the command of Red Lake House under his assistant, Magnus Birsay, and set off, "with two Big Canoes and one Indian canoe for our guide to the Weanipeck Lake" (HBCA, B.254/a/1, fo. 1). Albany men had previously used only the small canoes built by the Indians residing along the Albany and English Rivers. These canoes had supplemented the batteaux to carry men and goods along the main transport lines of Albany's hinterland. Large canoes, or canots du nord similar to those used by the Nor'Westers, became available to the Albany men shortly after the settlement of the trading post at "Lake la Pluis" (Rainy Lake). The first canots du nord to reach Osnaburgh appear to have been delivered in the summer of 1794 and were likely used in the "Blood River Expedition." These canoes lacked sufficient paddles, a relatively simple wilderness artifact that none of the Osnaburgh men were capable of making. The deployment of the canoes was delayed until Goodwin "paid Canadians for 6 paddles for large Canoes as very few of our men know how to make them" (HBCA, B.155/a/9a, fo. 20). Expansion into the East Winnipeg and Severn drainage basins depended upon canoes to navigate the small, and at times shoal, river channels of the headwater region. Batteaux were too large, yet cargo capacities larger than those of small Indian canoes were required if a successful trade was to be conducted alongside the Nor'Westers.

The journey beyond Red Lake proved as difficult as envisioned and Best and his men faced many hardships in descending the river. They reached Bad Lake on 1 October 1794 after ten days and twenty-seven portages. From there it took them two weeks and fifty portages to reach Lake Winnipeg (fig. 11). At the mouth of the "Blood" (Bloodvein) River, Best found Cameron's post under the management of "Latoor and Shivelee" (Latour and Chevalier) awaiting his arrival. They had orders to follow Best and oppose him wherever he built his house. Best had initially planned to cross Lake Winnipeg, but the Indians at the mouth of the river persuaded him to build there. The Canadians, perceiving the eastern coast of Lake Winnipeg to be poor for provisions, removed about forty miles to the west side of the lake and built at the bottom of the large bay at the mouth of the Weijack River (Fisher River).[40] Provisioning the Blood River House was indeed difficult and the Albany men survived on a sparse diet of venison, fish, and wild rice supplied by the local Indians.

The trade at the HBC Bloodvein rivermouth post during the 1794-95 season was fairly good, amounting to about 1,000 made beaver (HBCA, B.3/d/105, fo. 50; B.254/a/1, fo. 15d). The principal Indian who traded at the post was Matchey Huggemaw, or the Bad Governor. He had a bad reputation among the Canadian traders, but he got along well with the HBC men from Albany. The Ojibwa Indians who lived east of Lake Winnipeg were generally more aggressive than the Cree Indians who inhabited the coastal Hudson Bay Lowlands. There had been frequent outbreaks of violence against the Canadian traders, and murders had been committed on both sides. Periodically the Indians would assemble in large numbers to go on the warpath against the Sioux who lived south and west of Lake of the Woods. John Best was a witness to one of these gatherings in the spring of 1795 when thirty canoes of warriors met at the mouth of the Bloodvein (HBCA, B.254/a/1, fo. 17d).

On his return to Red Lake in the spring of 1795, Best followed a different route than on his fall inward journey. He had learned that an easier route existed through Lake Winnipeg and then up the Winnipeg River. This was not a simple task, as the Albany men were unacquainted with the tempestuous waters of the lake and were relatively unskilled in handling the large canoes. Their return through Lake Winnipeg was made possible only by engaging one of Latour's men who guided them as far as "point fouttra" near the outlet of the Winnipeg River.[41] There, Best found an Indian who guided them upriver to Red Lake.

During the summer of 1795, plans had been formulated to extend the Albany trade to the north of Cat Lake. In the spring David Sanderson had sent his son Jack (John) to explore the "road" to the Severn headwaters. Jack Sanderson succeeded in his journey and was sent down

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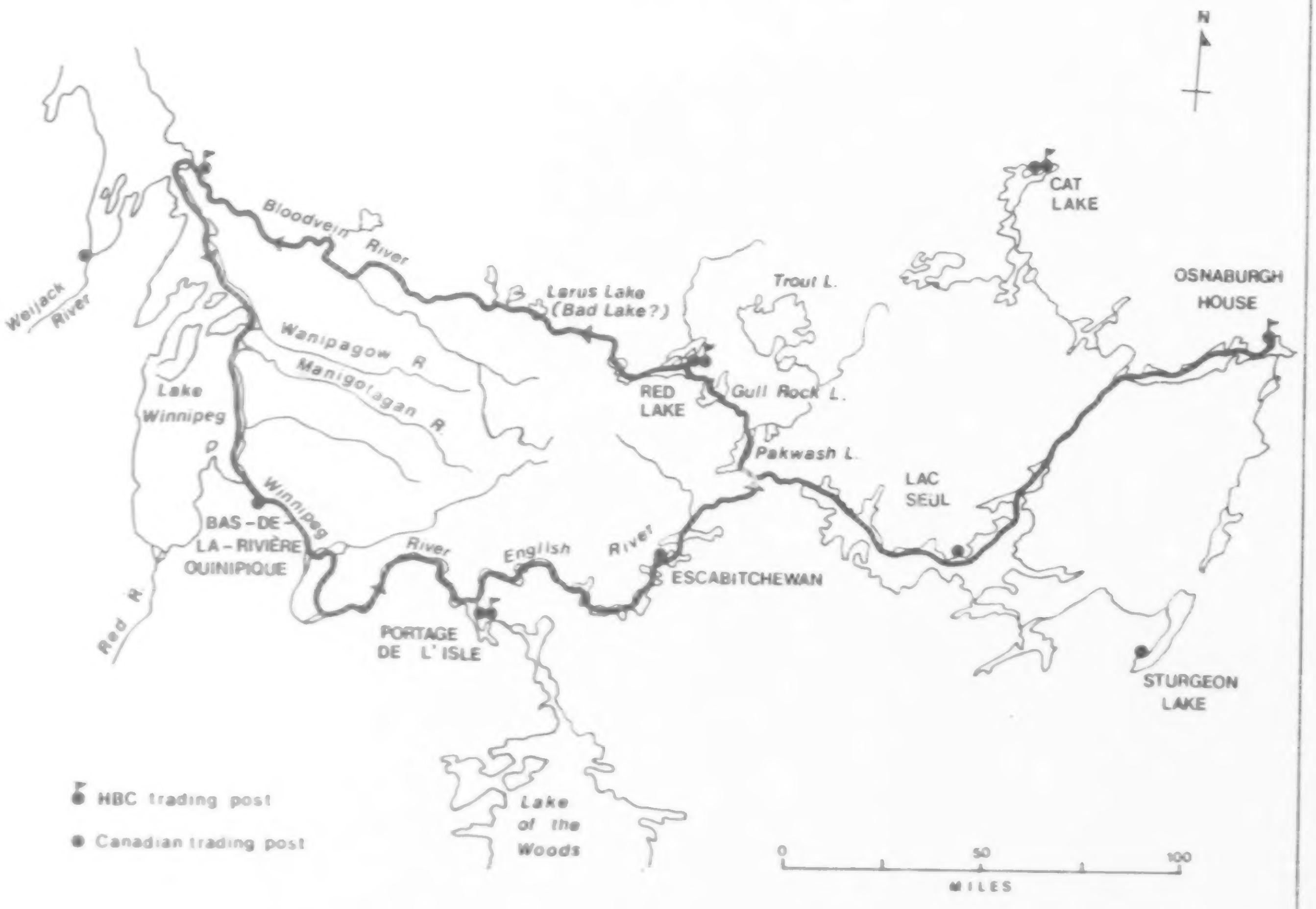
[40] The fisher was alternately called the wejack or brown polecat (Graham 1969:12). The Ojibwa translation of fisher was hojick according to Alexander Henry the Younger (Coues 1965, vol. 2:535).

[41] The term "point fouttra", commonly spelled Point au Foutre by the HBC men, was used to describe the point of land on the right bank of the Winnipeg River about four miles from its inflow to Lake Winnipeg. In 1800 Alexander Henry the Younger called it "Galet de la Pointe aux Loutres," or Otter Point Rock (Coues 1965, vol. 1:34). Henry's term seems to have been the proper French name for the point, but the word foutre, a French swear-word, was commonly substituted for loutre.

FIGURE 11: JOHN BEST'S "BLOOD RIVER" EXPEDITION, 1794-95


N
CAT LAKE
OSNABURGH HOUSE
Bloodvein River
Larus Lake (Bad Lake?)
Trout L.
Weijack River
Wanipagow R.
Manigotagan R.
Lake Winnipeg
RED LAKE
Gull Rock L.
Pakwash L.
LAC SEUL
Winnipeg River
BAS-DE-LA-RIVIÈRE OUINIPIQUE
English River
ESCABITCHEWAN
Red R.
PORTAGE DE L'ISLE
STURGEON LAKE
HBC trading post
Canadian trading post
Lake of the Woods
0
50
100
MILES

to Osnaburgh to inform James Sutherland of his findings:

> He says the road in general is not very bad, only some long carrying places; that Severn River is divided into 3 branches Great Lake on the middle branch, the farthest is the main River, and here Allan McFarlen is building a House which Jack saw and is in the direct road of all the Severn Indians. The Beaver is in great plenty here... the House McFarlen is building [probably on Sandy Lake] is within 4 days Journey of the Winnepeg great Lake where Mr. [Simon?] Fraser has wintered [possibly at the mouth of the Poplar River] who from the best information has made 100 packs of furs this year.... It is therefore evident that without Albany be enabled to launch out a settlement in this profitable part of the country that the Canadians will carry away all the trade, and in the end entirely ruin Severn as they will never be able to creep inland from that settlement (HBCA, B.155/a/10, fo. 34d).

During the summer two large canoes were procured at Osnaburgh for the expedition beyond Cat Lake. Two of David Sanderson's sons, Tom and Jack, who were experienced in travelling through the shield country, were sent to pilot the canoes as far as Cat Lake. The expedition to the Severn headwaters was therefore ready to depart in the fall of 1795. Sanderson's journey is worth tracing in detail to determine his travels and the locations of his competitors in this vaguely known region (fig. 12). Leaving Cat Lake on 5 September 1795 the party proceeded south to the Cat Lake River. The first major portage was "Bonos fall" (present Kashkego Rapids), undoubtedly named after the old Canadian trader Pierre Bonneau. They reached the head of the Albany drainage on the tenth of September and then crossed the "Cherry Mountains" (the height of land) to get to the "Grand River" (Berens River). On 22 September they came to another "long carrying place," or the height of land between the Berens and Severn River basins. Three days later they arrived at the "Great Lake" (present MacDowell Lake) where they found Turcot's post.

In addition to McFarlane at Sandy Lake and Turcot at MacDowell Lake, two other traders were sent by Cameron to the country above Cat Lake. They were "Solomon junior," probably Samuel Solomon, a son of Ezekiel Solomon,[42] who settled at Fly Lake (Whiteloon Lake), and "Mesieur" whose post was vaguely reported to be at the head of the Severn River. Sanderson thus faced considerable odds as his own outfit consisted of only nine men.

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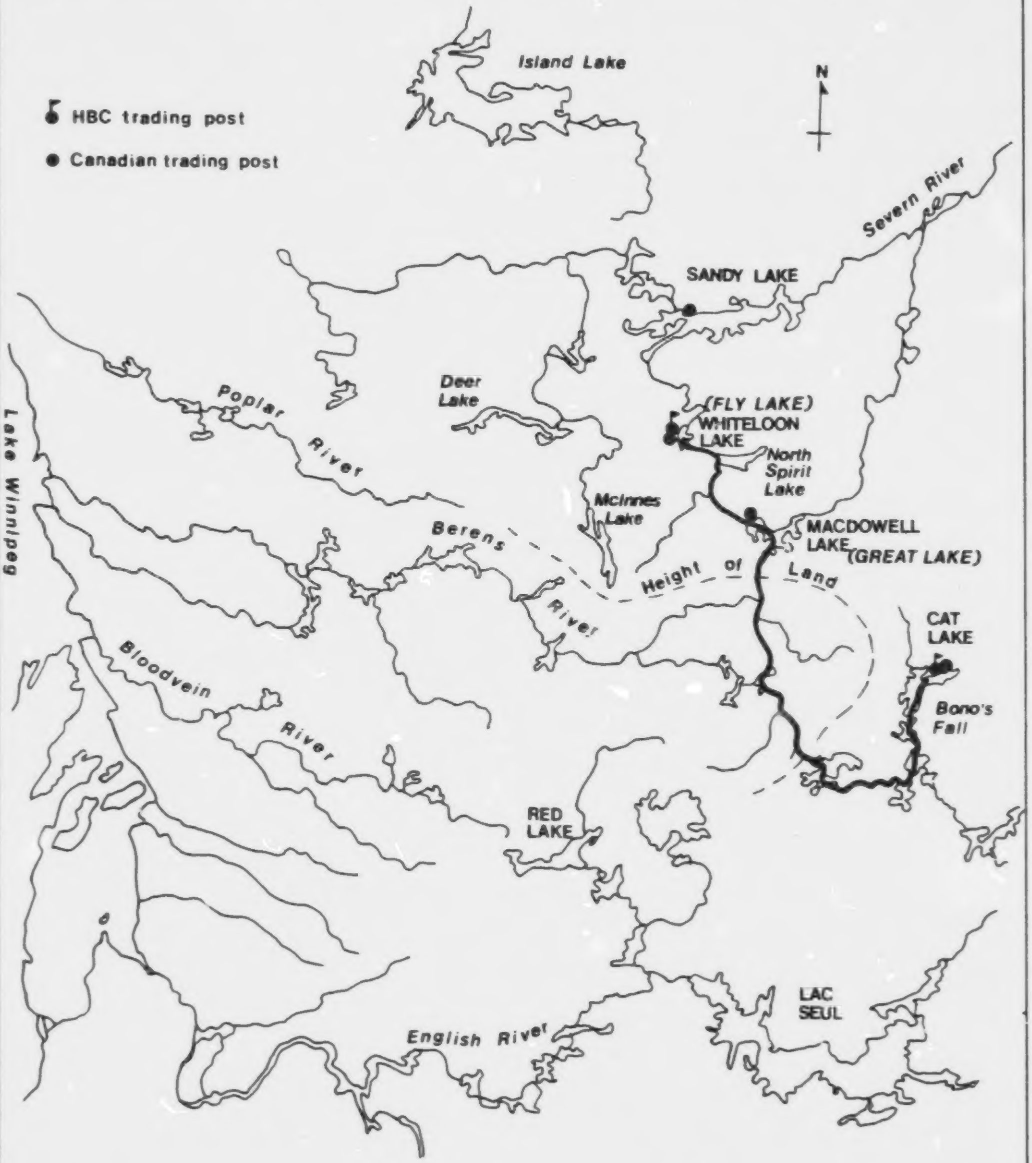
[42] During the 1796-97 season Samuel Solomon was at Lake Nipigon in opposition to Jacob Corrigal from Albany (HBCA, B.149/a/5, fo. 20). The next winter Solomon traded at Lake Nipigon assisted by a man named James Clark. They had come from Michilimackinac with a load of goods "on their own account" (HBCA, B.149/a/7, fo. 5). They were unsuccessful, and returned in the spring with only one and one-half packs of fur (ibid., fo. 19d).

FIGURE 12: DAVID SANDERSON'S "FLY LAKE" EXPEDITION, 1795-96


HBC trading post
Canadian trading post
N
Island Lake
Severn River
SANDY LAKE
Deer Lake
Poplar River
Lake Winnipeg
(FLY LAKE)
WHITELOON LAKE
North Spirit Lake
McInnes Lake
MACDOWELL LAKE
(GREAT LAKE)
Berens River
Height of Land
CAT LAKE
Bono's Fall
Bloodvein River
RED LAKE
LAC SEUL
English River
0
50
100
MILES

Sanderson built his house beside Solomon on Whiteloon Lake. Despite being surrounded by Cameron's men, he was able to procure a remarkable trade of forty-eight bundles of furs valued at over 3,000 made beaver (HBCA, B.3/d/106, fo. 47). This area, moreover, proved to be rich in beaver as nearly eighty percent of the returns were made up of beaver pelts. Sanderson was able to keep his expenses to a minimum and found that, by employing the Canadians' tactics of sending men to the Indians' camps to trade, he could increase his returns considerably. On his return to Osnaburgh in the spring, four Canadians deserted to his side, thus bolstering the ranks of experienced men on this front and adding another large large canoe to the service.

At the southern end of Lake Winnipeg during the 1795-96 season, Edward Clouston built for Albany at Point au Foutre, beside the North West Company post under the command of "Guiet." Clouston and ten men arrived at Point au Foutre on 28 September 1795, after a journey of thirty-five days from Osnaburgh House. The trip was delayed at several points because the rollered tracks laid down in advance by the HBC men who travelled to Brandon House had been destroyed by the Canadians (HBCA, B.4/a/1, fo. 4d). Clouston managed to procure 1,090 made beaver in furs, but this was traded at considerable expense (HBCA, B.3/d/106, fo. 56). Many of the Indians in the vicinity spent the winter in the prairie country, and cound not be persuaded to hunt furs. When one group of Indians visited his post in the spring Clouston remarked that "they have done nothing but laid among the Buffalo the whole winter" (HBCA, B.4/a/1, fo. 13d). Many Indians gathered near the trading posts in the spring for feasts and ceremonies. On 8 May 1796 Clouston and Guiet were invited to a feast which Clouston described as follows:

> when one makes a feast their method of invitation is as follows, one is sent with a bunch of quills with which he runs into each tent and presents each person invited with one but says nothing on receipt of this they all repair to the tent where the banquet is held and they deliver each one his quill to the person they received it from, they then sit down in rotation till the speach is made after which the victuals is divided and each person receives an equal quantity in his platter which he brings with him, sometimes the whole must be eaten and on going out of the tent after the feast is over each person goes three times aroung the fire against the sun and says Ka, ni, kik, a, ha when the whole tent with one voice answers Ho (HBCA, B.4/a/1, fo. 15d).

John Best had preceded Clouston to Lake Winnipeg by way of the Winnipeg River in the fall of 1796. He had intended to resettle his Blood River House, but found that it had been destroyed by the Nor'Westers. He therefore proceeded to the west coast of Lake Winnipeg. He reached Jack Head, or Tête au Brochet, on 19 September 1795 (see fig. 13). While he searched for a place to build his post, twelve Canadian canoes passed on their way to the north. Best determined to follow them, so he left his assistant, Simon Beaugrand, to build the post at Jack Head while he set off after the Canadians. He journeyed as far as Fort Dauphin River (present Dauphin River, sometimes called the Little Saskatchewan River) which the Canadians entered to reach their posts in the Lake Dauphin region. As the winter season was fast approaching Best stopped at the mouth of the river and built his post there. He named it Fort Suspense, possibly reflecting the dramatic two-month journey he had made from Osnaburgh House to reach the place.

Soon after his arrival, Best learned that there were other traders nearby. His old rival Duncan Cameron had built a post at "Fala Perdrix," or Partridge Crop (on present Fairford River), and opposing Cameron were two independent traders named "Reieume and La Viollet" (Joseph Rhéaume and Gabriel Atina Laviolette). These men had previously traded south of Lake S[illegible]ior, and were now engaged in a desperate attempt to compete against the established fur traders in the northwest (Duckworth 1984:11). The North West Company had several posts farther west along the Dauphin River and on Lake Dauphin. It must have been disconcerting to the Nor'Westers to learn that three competing posts were operating along one of its strategic transport routes in 1795-96. It was doubtless a topic of conversation when the wintering partners of that company met in the summer of 1796 at Grand Portage. Out of these talks there emerged a plan to take over the trade of the Little North.

Developments in Montreal also shaped the future of the fur trade in the Little North. In the summer of 1795 the Canadian trade in the Little North passed from Cotté and Shaw to Duncan Cameron. According to Harry Duckworth's insightful reconstruction of the events of 1795 and 1796, it seems that Cameron took over the business after Cotté died on 5 February 1795 in Montreal. Cameron formed a partnership with a man named St. Germain and made arrangements with the Montreal firms of Forsyth-Richardson and Todd-McGill to supply trade goods (Duckworth 1985:8). This business relationship was shaken when the powerful North West Company bought out both those firms in the winter of 1795-96. Cameron had no choice but to become a wintering partner for the North West Company. Thus, in quick succession, the Canadian trade of the Little North was absorbed by the North West Company. In the fall of 1796 the HBC men from Albany would compete directly against the Nor'Westers.

By 1796 Albany's inland trade had reached a wide area of the Little North and had in fact extended across Lake Winnipeg to the Interlake region and to the southeastern margins of the prairie. The Albany men had even ventured into the Nipigon and Rainy Lake countries. Competition was vigorous in all districts but it appears that the Canadian traders generally held an advantage in manpower and fur returns. The East Winnipeg country had been settled by fur traders on its southern margins and along the eastern coast of Lake Winnipeg. Much of East Winnipeg, however, remained unexploited, although traders from both companies were active along the adjacent Albany and Severn headwaters.

FIGURE 13: POINT AU FOUTRE TO FORT SUSPENSE, 1795 - 96

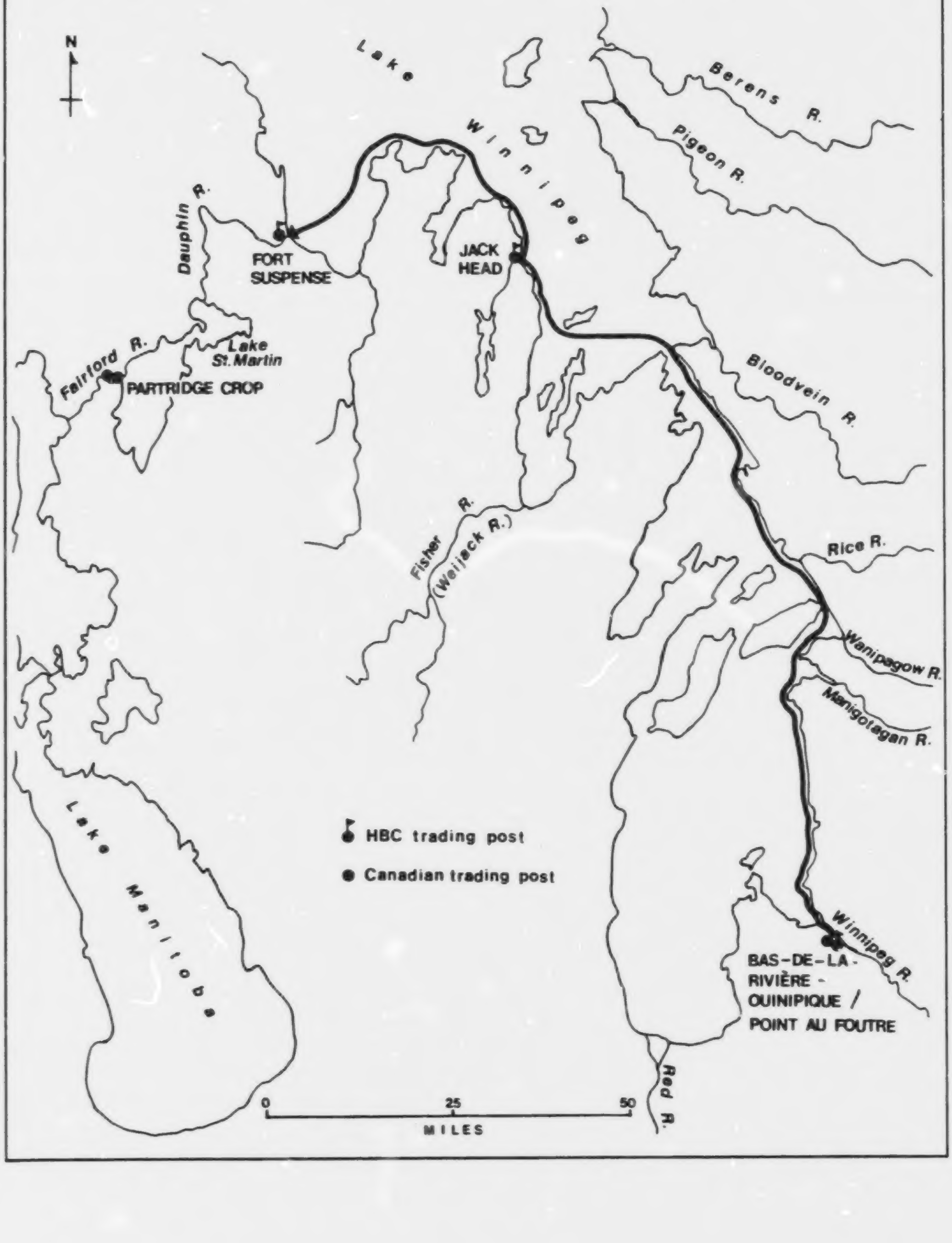
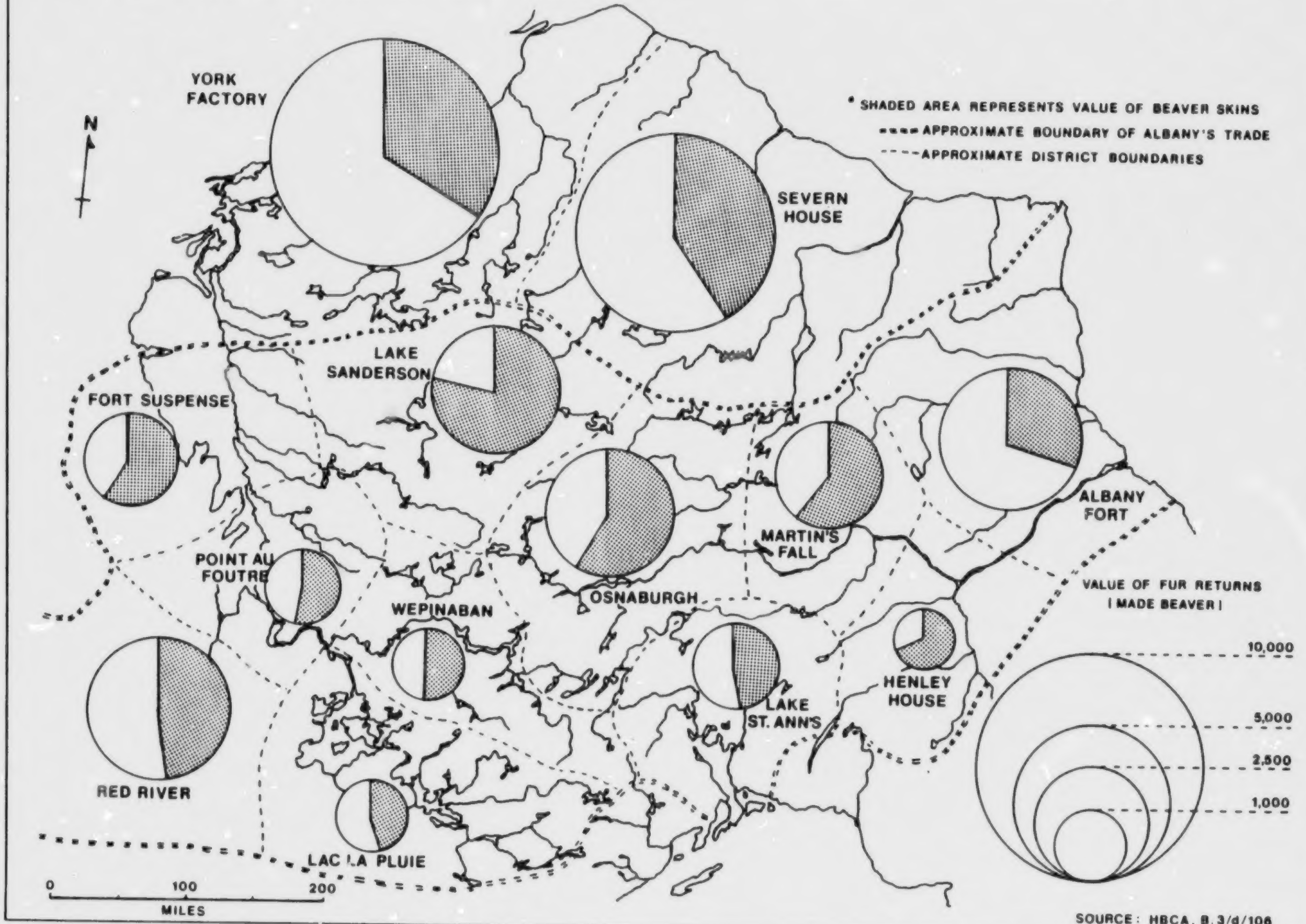

N
Lake Winnipeg
Berens R.
Pigeon R.
Dauphin R.
FORT SUSPENSE
JACK HEAD
Lake St. Martin
Fairford R.
PARTRIDGE CROP
Bloodvein R.
Fisher R. (Weijack R.)
Rice R.
Wanipagow R.
Manigotagan R.
Lake Manitoba
HBC trading post
Canadian trading post
Winnipeg R.
BAS-DE-LA-RIVIÈRE-OUINIPIQUE / POINT AU FOUTRE
Red R.
0
25
50
MILES

Figure 14 shows the returns of the Hudson's Bay Company in the Little North in 1796. The proportional circles represent the total trade in made beaver for each district, and these circles have been divided to show the relative value of beaver pelts each district was producing. The map reveals the large area over which Albany's trade was conducted. It also shows that beaver pelts comprised roughly fifty percent or more of the value of fur returns from all districts except Albany Fort. As in the preceding hundred years of tidewater trading, beaver remained the most important pelt in this period of inland competition in the Little North. The map also shows that it was along the expanding frontier of the fur trade in the Little North that the beaver was the most plentiful. The Lake Sanderson district at the Severn headwaters procured the greatest returns of beaver, and this fact accounts in part for the deflection of trade into this region and for the company's failure to settle the East Winnipeg country from the vantage of Cat Lake at that time.

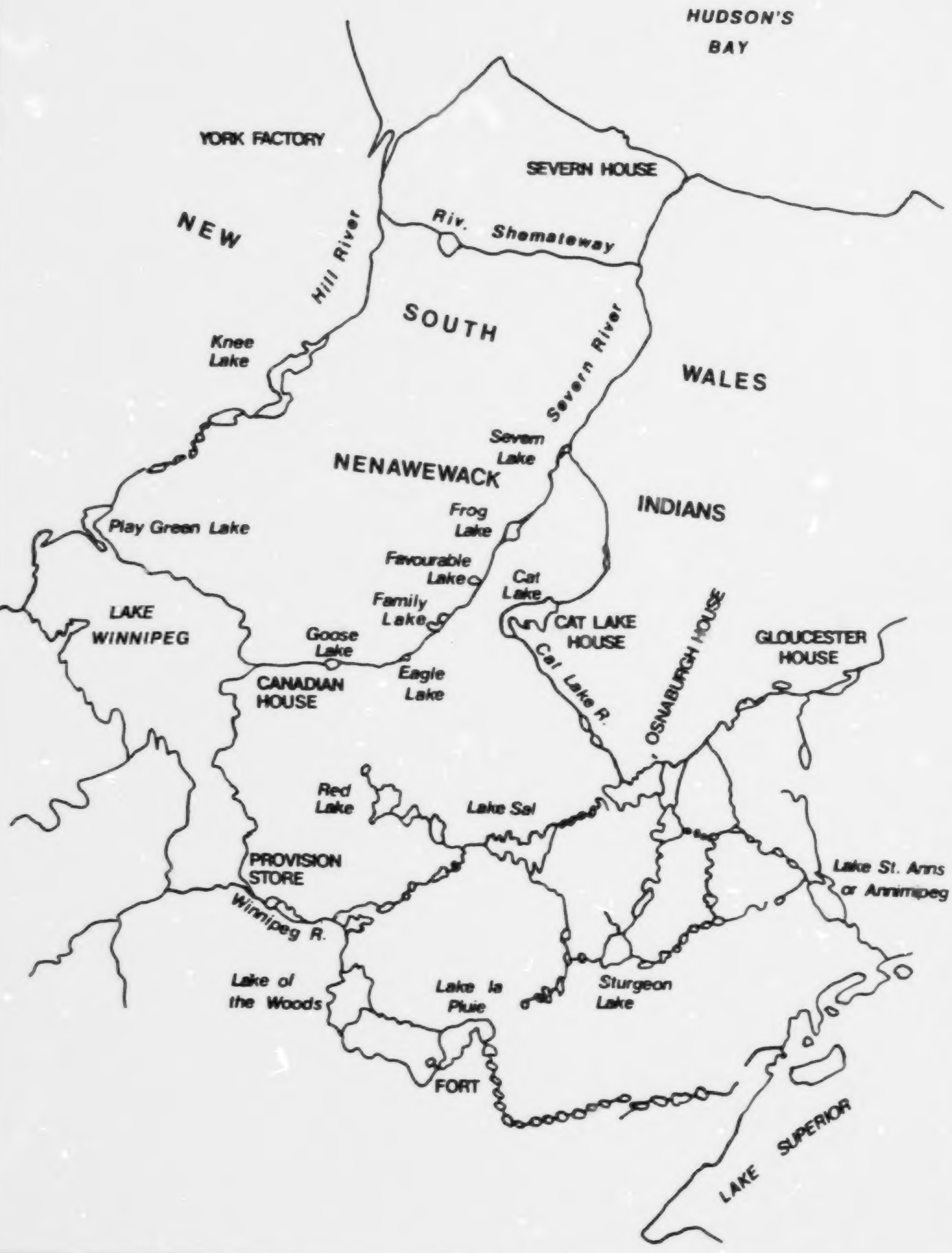
The state of HBC geographical knowledge in 1796 can be seen in Aaron Arrowsmith's Map of America, which was published that year from information in the company's possession. Figure 15 is the section of Arrowsmith's map showing the area surrounding the East Winnipeg country. The southern and northern connections to Lake Winnipeg were drawn quite accurately but the lake itself and the country to the east of it were distorted, reflecting the vague knowledge of this area imparted to Arrowsmith. A Canadian house was depicted on an East Winnipeg River, likely the Berens, and this river was shown to connect with the Severn River flowing to Hudson Bay. The Lake Sanderson district, located in the Severn headwaters, and the area westward to Lake Winnipeg therefore remained almost as poorly known in 1796 as they had been prior to William Tomison's journey of 1767.

FIGURE 14: HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY FUR RETURNS, 1795-96


YORK FACTORY
N
* SHADED AREA REPRESENTS VALUE OF BEAVER SKINS
APPROXIMATE BOUNDARY OF ALBANY'S TRADE
APPROXIMATE DISTRICT BOUNDARIES
SEVERN HOUSE
LAKE SANDERSON
FORT SUSPENSE
ALBANY FORT
MARTIN'S FALL
POINT AU FOUTRE
OSNABURGH
WEPINABAN
VALUE OF FUR RETURNS (MADE BEAVER)
10,000
5,000
2,500
1,000
HENLEY HOUSE
LAKE ST. ANN'S
RED RIVER
LAC LA PLUIE
0
100
200
MILES

SOURCE: HBCA, B.3/d/106

FIGURE 15: A SECTION OF ARROWSMITH'S MAP OF AMERICA, 1796
[redrawn from original]


HUDSON'S BAY
YORK FACTORY
SEVERN HOUSE
Riv. Shemateway
NEW
SOUTH
WALES
Hill River
Severn River
Knee Lake
Severn Lake
NENAWEWACK
INDIANS
Play Green Lake
Frog Lake
Favourable Lake
Cat Lake
Family Lake
LAKE WINNIPEG
Goose Lake
CAT LAKE HOUSE
Cat Lake R.
OSNABURGH HOUSE
GLOUCESTER HOUSE
CANADIAN HOUSE
Eagle Lake
Red Lake
Lake Sal
PROVISION STORE
Lake St. Anns or Annimipeg
Winnipeg R.
Lake of the Woods
Lake la Pluie
Sturgeon Lake
FORT
LAKE SUPERIOR

Chapter VI

"SO MANY SETTLEMENTS AROUND US": THE COMPETITION FOR FURS INCREASES, 1796-1800

Duncan Cameron left his post at Partridge Crop and went to Grand Portage in the summer of 1796 to make arrangements for his transfer to the North West Company. There he received a supply of trading goods and was given instructions to return to Lake Nipigon and direct the company's operations in the Little North (Duckworth 1985:9). The North West Company referred to its operations in this area as the Nipigon Department, and this included the area from Lake Nipigon north to the Hudson Bay Lowlands and west to the height of land which bounded the Lake Winnipeg drainage.

The North West Company administered its fur trade in the Little North in much the same way as it did in other areas of the Northwest. Regional "departments" were presided over by a wintering partner of the company or an experienced clerk. These proprietors or bourgeois met each spring at Grand Portage to discuss the state of the fur trade in their respective departments. These annual meetings were occasions for important discussions on the quality and quantity of departmental fur returns, prices of trade goods. cost of country provisions, relationships with trading Indians, and the nature of competition with other fur traders, especially the Hudson's Bay Company. Decisions to increase or decrease the complement of men and goods in each department were reached for the common good of the partners who shared in the annual profits accruing from the entire trade and allowed them to cut costs and concentrate on the most profitable areas of the fur trade. As a result, North West Company posts shifted according to market conditions in Europe and eastern North America and the state of fur resources within the various departments in the Northwest.

The Hudson's Bay Company's administration, in contrast, was centralized in London where the governor and committee made most of the important decisions regarding the fur trade. Considerable latitude, however, was given to the chief factors of the bayside factories who were responsible for the deployment of men and goods to various inland posts. The inland territories of each bayside factory (with the exception of Severn House until 1807) were subdivided into trading districts. These districts were managed by a senior clerk, and often contained a central depot and one or more outposts. The yearly arrangement of men and goods for each district was often drafted in London, but modified at the bay. At Albany Fort a council of senior officers discussed the annual business, but rarely did the clerks in charge of inland districts visit the bay. Unlike the NWC proprietors who made annual pilgrimages to Grand Portage, HBC inland traders did not meet regularly to plan the next year's agenda. Instead, the annual trading outfit of goods and provisions for each district was forwarded from Albany Fort to Martin's Fall or Osnaburgh House in the spring. These outfits were exchanged for the bundles of furs brought out from the interior districts. The rationale behind this system was mainly to save precious transportation time during the summer ice-free season. Rivers and lakes in the interior of the Little North usually became traversable about the middle of May, and were blocked by ice by mid-November. Fully loaded boats could make the journey from Lake Winnipeg to Albany Fort in about a month and a half, and the return journey in roughly two months. The establishment of Martin's Fall as a break of bulk centre from which larger boats plied downstream and smaller batteaux were used upstream saved additional time and effort in Albany's inland transportation system.

The drawback to this system was the inability of the inland and bayside men to meet to discuss problems and prospects in the fur trade. This was partially overcome by written correspondence between the inland officers and Albany's chief factor. Each year letters were exchanged by a packet delivery that usually accompanied trips from post to post in all seasons (by boat or canoe in summer, and by dog sled or snowshoe in winter). The extensive correspondence, plus the receipt of journals and account books from interior posts, made it easier for Albany's chief factor to plan the next season's arrangement of men and goods. Written communication, however, was not as effective as personal contact in managing the growing network of Albany's inland districts. Inland officers often complained that their outfits were too small, or of inferior quality. After inspecting his outfit for the 1799-1800 season, David Sanderson wrote to Albany complaining, "My goods is no assortment but that you cannot help if the Honble Company will send no goods they cannot expect any return" (HBCA, B.192/a/2, fo. 17). Sanderson's comments point to another problem in the HBC administration. There was a considerable time delay from requests made in the field to their approval by the London committee, and finally to the implementation of changes at Albany Fort. It could take two or three years to effect a substantial change in the organization of Albany's fur trade. This time lag made it difficult for Albany to respond quickly to pressures from the Nor'Westers or other competing traders.

The HBC inland fur trade was also encumbered by competition between district clerks. This type of internal competition was smoothed over by the North West Company partners at their annual meeting, when it was made clear that losses in one department could be made up by gains in another. The Hudson's Bay Company had no such mechanism in place, nor did its inland officers have any motivation to reduce their trade for the benefit of another district. Unlike the NWC wintering partners, the HBC inland trading masters did not share in the overall profits of the trade at Albany until 1809 when the company reorganized its operations (Rich 1960, vol. 2:291). They received a premium only on the fur returns of their own individual districts. Duncan Cameron was critical of this system when he wrote in 1805, "Those people [HBC inland traders] do not care at what price they buy or whether their employers gain by them so long as they have their premium, which sets them in opposition to one another almost as much as they are to us" (Masson 1960, vol. 2:297). This created considerable friction between neighbouring inland districts, and indeed between neighbouring bayside factories.

In Albany's interior this problem surfaced immediately after the first inland posts were built. Shortly after the establishment of Osnaburgh House by John Best in 1786, John Kipling accused Best of "stealing" several of the Indians who used to trade at Gloucester House (HBCA, B.3/b/23, fo. 40). The inland traders also vied with one another over the disbursement of trade goods and the deployment of men. Each inland trading master sought to ensure that his outfit contained sufficient quantity and quality of trade goods, and men who were capable of wintering in the district. Suitable manpower was of particular significance in the Albany inland trade. Common labourers had little incentive to work in remote districts, especially if provisions were scarce and travel was difficult. Most men preferred to winter in the Red River District where buffalo meat was easily procured, or at posts closer to Albany Fort. David Sanderson expressed his concern about this subject in a letter to Albany dated 8 August 1799:

> I had the greatest difficulty in persuading the men to to to Sandy Lake, Charles Sutherland possitively refused to go above OH [Osnaburgh House] he says he agreed to winter with Mr. Best and no where else, he at last consented to go with Mr. Linklater because the place [Deer Lake] is not far from OH and the road good. Mr. Goodwin took Chr. Harvey with him to RR [Red River] and left William Halcro in his place, the latter refused to go to Sandy Lake.... Tom Harvey likewise refused to go to Sandy Lake but he had no objection to go to Mr. Linklater's station (HBCA, B.192/a/2, fo. 17).

Labour problems of this nature were not common among North West Company personnel, but they multiplied under the HBC system of individual district management.

Two departments dominated the Nor'Westers' trade in the Little North: the Lac Ouinipique and Nipigon Departments. The Lac Ouinipique Department had been established earlier than Nipigon, and was supplied directly from Grand Portage. The proprietor of the Lac Ouinipique Department was William McKay, who became a wintering partner of the North West Company in 1796 (Wallace 1934:474). In 1799 McKay had seven clerks under his charge: John Cameron, Donald McIntosh, Benjamin Frobisher, Jacques Dupont, Joseph Laurent, Gabriel Atina [Laviolette], and François Amiot (PAC, MG19 C1 vol. 23, fo. 3). The proprietor of the Nipigon Department was Duncan Cameron. He too had seven clerks in 1799: "Ronald [Ranald] Cameron, John Dugald Cameron [Ranald's brother], Jacques Adhemar, Jean-Baptiste Chevallier [Chevalier], Allan Macfarlane [McFarlane], Jean-Baptiste Pomainville, and Frederick Shultz" (ibid., fo. 4).

The Hudson's Bay Company, in contrast, had five districts within the Little North. These were Osnaburgh, Lake Sanderson, Red Lake, Point au Foutre, and Lake St. Ann's. The men in charge were respectively John McKay, David Sanderson, Magnus Birsay, Thomas Vincent, and William Corrigal. The HBC districts were smaller in size, and they contained fewer trading posts. For example, the Nipigon Department of the North West Company had at least twelve posts in 1799-1800 while none of the Hudson's Bay Company districts had more than two.

The Nor'Westers of the Nipigon Department were, for the most part, Cameron's former traders. Many of the men had worked for Cotté and Shaw, and some may have been employed by Solomon. They resumed trading at their old stations with the only apparent difference being the trade goods which came from the North West Company. Cameron, as proprietor, arranged the deployment of men and goods. While travelling through Lake Nipigon in August 1796 and on to Lake St. Joseph, he dispatched men to winter at Lake Nipigon, Lake Minnitaki, Sturgeon Lake, Red Lake, Eagle Lake, Escabitchewan, Pashkokogan Lake and Horse Lake (between Sturgeon Lake and Lake Nipigon) (HBCA, B.155/a/12, fos. 13d, 18d). Cameron himself headed five canoes that proceeded toward the Cat Lake quarter. He left some men at Cat Lake to pass the winter, and then proceeded to Great Lake where another post was settled. Cameron took the remaining two canoes and eleven men and went to Fly Lake (present Whiteloon Lake) and occupied the post built by Samuel Solomon in 1795. There Cameron met David Sanderson who had arrived at Fly Lake on 3 September 1796, one month earlier than Cameron. Sanderson had eleven men with him, including two of his sons, John and David. Also with him was Allan McFarlane who had deserted from Cameron the previous year. Sanderson had anticipated Cameron's arrival and sent McFarlane to build a post at Eagle Lake on the Berens River. This was the first time the Albany men were able to steal a march on Cameron, but it was not long before Cameron dispatched several men to build beside McFarlane on Eagle Lake.

That season, 1796-97, Sanderson and Cameron were both surprised to learn that two large canoes of Canadians had settled a post on Deer Lake, which was about forty miles to the west of Whiteloon Lake near the height of land separating the East Winnipeg and Severn basins. These men were Nor'Westers from Grand Portage and had reached Deer Lake by ascending the Poplar River from the east coast of Lake Winnipeg and then crossing into the Severn River basin. This was the first attempt by the Lac Ouinipique Nor'Westers to go beyond lakeshore trading. It was also their deepest eastward thrust from this vantage, for it took them beyond East Winnipeg drainage and into the Severn headwaters that had already been settled by their comrades from Nipigon. This overlap of trade between two departments of the North West Company lasted only one season and was never repeated. The problem may have been settled at the annual meeting of wintering Nor'Westers at Grand Portage in the summer of 1797.

The relationship between the two veterans, Sanderson and Cameron, at Whiteloon Lake during the winter of 1796-97 was filled with tension. As Sanderson wrote in a letter to Albany on 17 August 1797,

> I have good reason to write against Mr. Cameron when he and his men took by force from the Indians the furrs that was intend'd to pay my debts which he prides himself in his numbers & says he always had more than the Hudson's Bay Company and ever will in a country where there is no civil or Military Law (HBCA, B.3/b/34, fo. 56).

The Nor'Westers may have carried a greater trade from the Fly Lake quarter, but the HBC fur returns were also encouraging. The total trade at Fly and Eagle Lakes amounted to the value of 2,182 made beaver, of which more than half was in beaver skins (HBCA, B.3/d/107, fo. 50).

Meanwhile, in the Point au Foutre district in 1796-97, Edward Clouston left John Cobb with five men to winter beside the Nor'Westers at the bottom of Winnipeg River while he took the remaining ten men in two batteaux to build a post somewhere on Lake Winnipeg. His object was to find a place away from the Nor'Westers, and he was guided in this task by Matchey Huggemaw to Big Island (present Black Island). The trading post, named Post Doubtful, was built on the east side of the island on Buffalo Head (near present Gray Point) (HBCA, E.3/3, fo. 60). Clouston's post was situated between the NWC posts at the mouth of the Pigeon River (75 miles to the north) and at the mouth of the Winnipeg River (45 miles to the south). It did not take long, however, for the Nor'Westers to find out the location of the Albany post. On 15 December 1796 three Canadians arrived with sleds loaded with trading goods from the Winnipeg River (HBCA, B.236/a/1, fo. 7d). They had been sent by "Monsieur La Rock [Larocque]." Clouston learned from Larocque that a HBC post had been built by York Factory men at the mouth of the Jackfish River (present Gunisao River) near the northern outflow of the lake. Clouston wanted to visit the York traders, but he was unable to secure a guide to take him along the uncharted coast of the lake.

Clouston and his men gained the upper hand in the fur trade during the winter of 1796-97. They outnumbered the Nor'Westers by more than three to one, but the competition was still fierce and Clouston wondered at the extravagant prices paid by the Nor'Westers. On 13 April 1797 the Nor'Westers departed (burning their post behind them), and Clouston observed:

> they have spent 1 keg of neat [undiluted] spirits besides other goods and only made 50 M Beaver, this shows how dear the Canadians pay for their furrs sometimes; my particular outfit on my arrival here was only 7 kegs and 3 gall: each keg measured only 8 g-8 1/2 [gallons], although they are charged 10 [gallons] in the Invoice the deficiency is owing to the great leakage. I am nevertheless in expectation to make 25 packs of furrs (HBCA, B.236/a/1, fo. 15d).

On 10 June 1797 Clouston and his men left Post Doubtful with twenty-eight packs of furs and one keg of castoreum valued at 1715 made beaver. They arrived one day later at Point au Foutre House where Cobb and his men had traded twenty-four packs of furs worth 1440 made beaver (ibid., fo. 20). Clouston remarked that these "were very good returns for the goods we brought in and the condition they were in" (ibid., fo. 20). Clouston's pride in his fur trade was somewhat diminished when he was passed by a brigade of NWC canoes on the Winnipeg River. Each canoe carried twenty-five or twenty-six packs and "Messrs [Peter?] Grant and [William] Thorburn," who led the brigade, told Clouston that their total returns from the Red River Department amounted to 495 packs (roughly equal to the entire Albany trade). At a portage along the Winnipeg River, Clouston had an opportunity to watch the Canadians handle their canoes. In his journal Clouston remarked that these men "take a pride in working in the canoes and it may be said with truth that there is no people on the face of the Globe more fit for carrying on this Furr Trade than the Canadians" (ibid., fo. 21). He recommended that the Hudson's Bay Company engage more Canadians for its service. Not only would their skills be appreciated, but their attitude was rated by Clouston as superior to many of the Orkneymen in the HBC service. This was especially true in 1797 when "the present War in Europe and scarcity of men in Orkney makes our men very saucy and demand exorbitant wages" (ibid.).

Henry Hallett was the man in charge of the York post at the mouth of the Gunisao River during the winter of 1796-97. This was the first year that the York men had succeeded in establishing a post on Lake Winnipeg, and Hallett was vigorously opposed by the Nor'Westers. When he learned of Clouston's post to the southward, he dispatched two men "to gain further information as it certainly would be much easier to settle a post there from York Fort then from the above place [Albany] as they have such a great Distance to convey their goods before they can reach this quarter" (HBCA, B.154/a/1, fo. 17). Although the York men could not reach Post Doubtful, Hallett was the first to grasp the significance of the territorial overlap that was beginning to develop between York and Albany in the East Winnipeg Country.

The men of the North West Company's Nipigon Department, equipped at Grand Portage, returned to the Severn headwaters in the 1797-98 season with redoubled efforts to cripple the Albany trade. Cameron had persuaded Allan McFarlane to return to the North West Company, and had outfitted posts for Deer Lake, Sandy Lake, the White Fishing Place (possibly White Claw Lake) and the Carp River (exact location uncertain). Sanderson was able to counter this only by sending men to Deer Lake and complained, "I now see plainly if a larger quantity of goods and likewise more men is not allowed for this quarter it will be impossible to cope with Mr. Cameron any longer" (HBCA, B.71/a/3, fo. 5). Despite Cameron's advantages, Sanderson was able to procure a substantial trade amounting to forty-two packs of furs valued at 2,749 made beaver (HBCA, B.3/d/109, fo. 37). Cameron's trade was only slightly larger, consisting of forty-four packs (HBCA, B.155/a/13, fo. 27).

Meanwhile, along the eastern coast of Lake Winnipeg during the 1797-98 season, Thomas Vincent succeeded Clouston in the command of Point au Foutre House, but no outposts were built on the lake that year. The Albany men, however, did push beyond Lake Winnipeg to the Lake Manitoba region and settled a house at Manitoobar (the Narrows). The York post at Jack River was resettled but suffered from vigorous competition with the Nor'Wester William McKay, who had been placed in charge of the Lac Ouinipique (Lake Winnipeg) Department.

Thomas Vincent, master of Point au Foutre House, was opposed by Gabriel Laviolette, the former independent trader who had joined the North West Company in the summer of 1797 (Duckworth 1984:12). The North West Company's post at Bas de la Rivière Ouinipique had become an important provision depot along the main transport corridor to the Great North.[43] Vincent thus had to struggle to procure an adequate stock of country provisions from the Indians to feed his men during the winter. His concern was such that he prefaced his journal with a monthly list of expenses for provisions (table 6), illustrating the high prices he was obliged to pay.

Point au Foutre House was well positioned to watch the movements of the Nor'Westers on their way to and from the Great North. In the summer of 1799 Thomas Miller remained at the post and recorded the frequent comings and goings of the Canadian canoe brigades. On 11 June, William Thorburn and Peter Grant arrived in two light canoes from the Athabasca country. Two weeks later the main body of the Athabasca brigade, sixteen canoes in the charge of John Finlay, passed Point au Foutre. On the 3rd of July four canoes from Great Slave Lake arrived. These were the last of the outward bound canoes. On 22 July the inward brigades began to pass on their way from Grand Portage to the Great North. The first was a single canoe under "Mr. Perron" who belonged to "a new company formed this year" (HBCA, B.4/a/3, fo. 1d). This company was the XY Company (also called the New North West Company) which had been organized at Montreal by a group of merchants who planned to break the North West Company's stranglehold on the northwestern fur trade. Led by Forsyth, Richardson and Company, the XY Company included some prosperous Montreal and Detroit firms such as Parker, Gerrard and Ogilvy, and Leith, Jamieson and Company (Wallace 1934:17). In 1802 Sir Alexander Mackenzie joined the XY Company (thereafter called Sir Alexander Mackenzie and Company) and this signalled a brief period of intensive competition that ended in the merger of the two in 1805. The solitary canoe that passed under the shadow of Point au Foutre on 22 July 1799 was a precursor to these events.

On 29 July eleven North West Company canoes arrived with Angus Shaw who was bound for the Athabasca and John McDonald (of Garth) who was bound for Rocky Mountain House. John Finlay returned on the 31st of

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[43] Sometime between 1796 and 1800 the HBC and NWC posts were moved downriver and built on the left bank across from the mouth of present Spence Creek.

TABLE 6

Thomas Vincent's Expenses for Provisions at Point au Foutre House, 1797-98

Fall	- Paid for	20 gallons Rice	20	made beaver
Sept.	- " "	dried moose flesh	17	" "
Oct.	- " "	dried moose flesh and a little fat	41	" "
Nov.	- " "	dried moose flesh and a little fat	5	" "
Dec.	- " "	nearly a whole moose	10	" "
Jan.	- " "	moose flesh	7	" "
Feb.	- " "	3 bags of piece meat	9	" "
March	- " "	11 bags of dried buffalo flesh and some fat	30	" "
April	- " "	3 bags dried buffalo flesh	9	" "

Source: HBCA, B.4/a/2, fo. 1d

July with a brigade of twenty canoes destined for Athabasca. The following day Donald McTavish passed with seven canoes for the English River (Churchill River) Department. An XY Company man named McKenzie (probably Alexander, a nephew of Sir Alexander Mackenzie) arrived with four canoes bound for an undisclosed location. Simon Fraser passed by on the 5th of August with three Athabasca canoes. A party of twenty-six canoes under (Archibald) Norman McLeod and "John McDonald" (probably John Macdonell) was reported on 9 August; these were NWC traders. John Wills, a partner in the XY Company, arrived with four canoes on 11 August. He was followed two days later by "Mr. Roug Blau" (Pierre Rastel de Rocheblave), another partner of the XY Company, with seven canoes. On 20 August Thomas McMurray, an XY Company clerk, passed with four canoes for Red River. Finally, on 23 August the Lac Ouinipique Nor'Westers arrived in eight canoes headed by William McKay. Three days later the HBC batteaux arrived at Point au Foutre and Thomas Miller concluded his remarkable logbook of Canadian trader traffic in the summer of 1799.[44]

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[44] Identification of many of these traders is based upon Wallace 1934, and PAC, MG19 C1, vol. 32.

The Hudson's Bay Company did not face such formidable forces along the northern fringes of the Little North. In 1798 Thomas Thomas, the energetic master of Severn House, finally made plans to build inland posts at the headwaters of the Severn River and replace the Albany men there. Thomas had learned from Indians that "Mr. D. Saunders" of Albany had a post at "Wappistaquiaw" (Sandy Lake) which was only six days' journey upriver from Severn. James Swain was appointed to visit Sanderson's post in the summer of 1798. At Sandy Lake, however, his Indian guide refused to take him farther. As Swain wrote,

> I then beg'd him to accompany me to the Place where David Saunders wintered but he said he would not... he told me it was two Days work to David Saunder's House that there was no carrying places but still current mostly all the way, that it was unecessary to go farther as there were many Indians about this Lake (HBCA, B.198/a/51, fo. 6).

Although Swain's report of the Severn headwater region was promising, Thomas appears to have had insufficient resources to follow up on Swain's explorations, and several years passed before inland settlements were finally established from Severn.

Sanderson and his Albany men returned to the Severn headwaters for the 1798-99 season with an increased outfit in four large canoes. Sanderson built at Sandy Lake and dispatched John Linklater with six men to build an outpost to the west. It is difficult to determine exactly where Linklater and his men travelled, but his journal provides some clues about his whereabouts[45] (fig. 16). While headed north of Deer Lake on the Severn River, Linklater was impressed by "3 carrying places not the longest but the worst ever I seed the river between ye falls is exceptionally dangerous" (HBCA, B.54/a/1, fo. 3d). He then travelled westward (probably on present Cobham River), and settled on Duck Lake (present Hudwin Lake). On 21 September 1798, he was visited by some Indians who recalled the earliest Albany explorations in East Winnipeg: "the Inds which arrived this Day informs me that Mr. George Sutherland wintered in this part of ye country [1777-78] when he accompanied Cappematiswinekee from Albany" (ibid., fo. 4d).

During the winter of 1798-99 Linklater explored the country to the north and even visited Island Lake, which the Indians called Upawaca. After an unopposed and successful trade, the party journeyed back to Osnaburgh. On the way back, Linklater explored a different route which led him into the Berens River.[46] Undoubtedly, he learned of this

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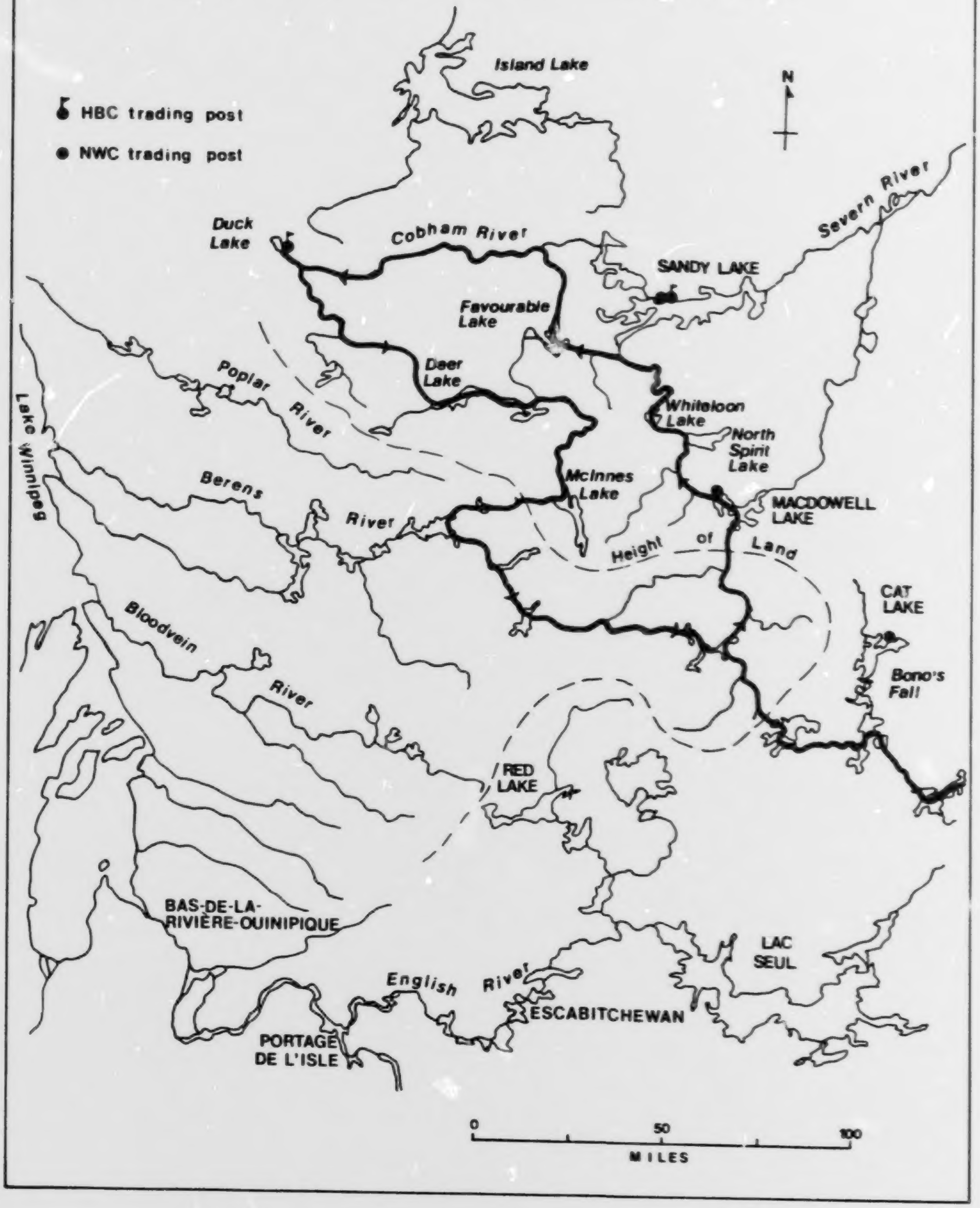
[45] In 1885, A.P. Low conducted a geological survey of the Severn River, north of Deer Lake, and wrote: "In this distance there are five chutes, which together give forty-nine feet fall; or sixteen, ten, six, five, and twelve feet" (Low 1886:9).

[46] The Berens River was named after Joseph Berens, Jr., who was Deputy Governor and Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company from 1812 to

FIGURE 16: JOHN LINKLATER'S "DUCK LAKE" EXPEDITION 1798-99


HBC trading post
NWC trading post
N
Island Lake
Duck Lake
Cobham River
SANDY LAKE
Severn River
Favourable Lake
Deer Lake
Poplar River
Whiteloon Lake
North Spirit Lake
Lake Winnipeg
Berens River
McInnes Lake
MACDOWELL LAKE
Height of Land
CAT LAKE
Bloodvein River
Bono's Fall
RED LAKE
BAS-DE-LA-RIVIÈRE-OUINIPIQUE
LAC SEUL
English River
ESCABITCHEWAN
PORTAGE DE L'ISLE
0
50
100
MILES

route from the Indians and it is reasonable to assume that this information was conveyed to him by the Indians who told him of Sutherland's pioneer exploration of the East Winnipeg Country in 1777. Linklater was impressed with both the route and the prospects for trade. The region was accessible by batteaux and had yet to be exploited by the Nor'Westers. He wrote, "I am much surprised that from Mr. George Sutherlands remarks no person from Albany has visited this part of the Country before now, as either batteause or canoes can penetrate with as much ease and safety as any part of ye country I have travelled through" (HBCA, B.54/a/1, fo. 4d).

Sanderson, who had returned from a fiercely competitive trade against Cameron at Sandy Lake, expressed great interest in this route and proposed to settle a trial post on the Albany River the next fall. While this thrust was being planned the Albany and York traders on Lake Winnipeg remained pinned down to their posts at each end of the lake by vigorous competition from the Nor'Westers.

The season of 1799-1800 was critical for developing Albany's East Winnipeg trade. Sanderson requested a batteau for his outfit and ordered John Linklater to take it to Deer Lake using the Berens River route. Linklater successfully reached Deer Lake, but during the winter this enterprising trader was murdered. The first reports of his death indicated that he was a victim of an Indian attack during a drunken brawl (HBCA, B.192/a/2, fo. 3). Later evidence suggested that Linklater had provoked the attack (HBCA, B.3/b/37, fo. 37).

Meanwhile, Sanderson was having increasing difficulty at Sandy Lake. Not only was he ruthlessly opposed by Cameron, but he had a difficult time convincing the Albany men to accompany him with the canoes on the long and difficult journey to the Severn headwaters. Cameron and Sanderson were continually sending their men to the Indians' tents to trade furs, but Cameron, with his superior manpower and goods, was unquestionably the winner.

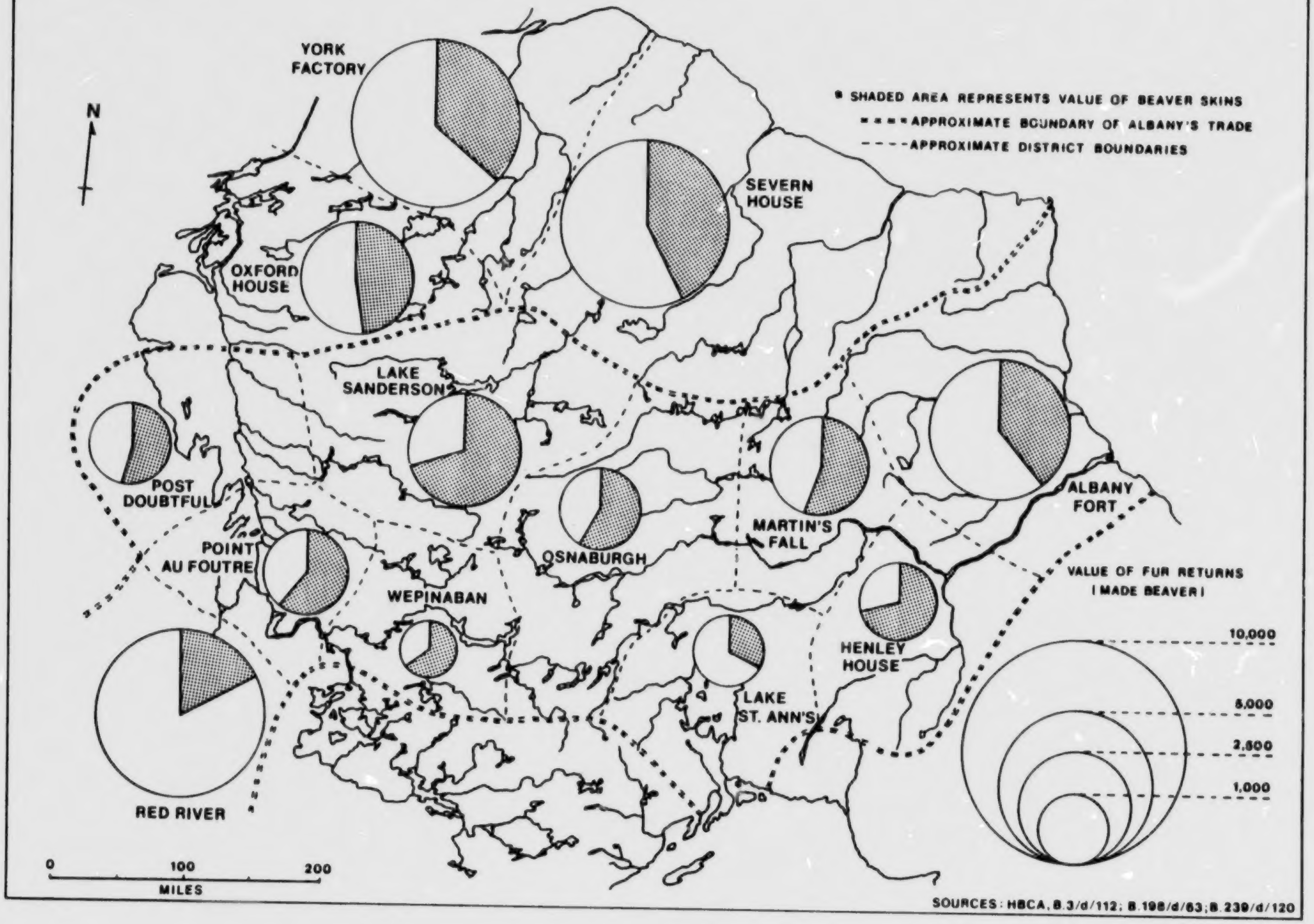
At Point au Foutre District in the 1799-1800 season Thomas Vincent outfitted a post for Anacootaugan River (present Manigotagan River) (see fig. 13). but this offered only paltry competition to the Nor'Westers who had a number of posts about the lake. As Vincent observed, "The prospects of Trade at this place I am sorry to say are the worst I ever saw owing to their being so many settlements around us" (HBCA, B.4/a/3, fo. 14d). He also complained that the Nor'Westers' large canoes were better adapted to this part of the country than the Albany batteaux, which the HBC men used exclusively in this district. Farther north Henry Hallett and his York men abandoned their house at the mouth of Gunisao (Jackfish) River in the spring of 1799, leaving the entire east coast of Lake Winnipeg north of the Manigotagan River to the North West Company.

1822. The first record of the name Berens River was made by Peter Fidler, who surveyed the eastern coast of Lake Winnipeg in 1808 (HBCA, E.3/3).

By 1800, as a consequence, the North West Company dominated the fur trade in East Winnipeg. Unlike the Albany men who faced a long and difficult journey by batteaux from James Bay, the Nor'Westers in their large canoes were efficiently supplied from their forward depot at Bas de la Rivière Ouinipique (Point au Foutre). Their outfits were substantially larger than those from Albany, and they were able to exploit a significantly greater area of the East Winnipeg Country. Although the York men had made a few attempts to settle the northern margins of East Winnipeg, these ventures met with little success against the powerful opposition from the Nor'Westers. The eastern headwater region had yet to be exploited to any degree by either company. It appears that the Nipigon Nor'Westers were restricted by their own departmental agreement to the country east of Lake Winnipeg drainage, but they managed to prevent the Albany men from venturing in full force into East Winnipeg by sending large trading parties along the Severn and Albany headwaters. For the Albany men, only the Berens River route to East Winnipeg, which had been explored by George Sutherland in 1777 and rediscovered by John Linklater in 1799, appeared to hold promise.

Although the Hudson's Bay Company faced an increasingly strong opposition from the Nor'Westers and the XY Company, its trade in furs from the Little North actually peaked during the period 1796 to 1800. The Canadian traders most likely experienced a similar and larger peak in their returns from the Little North. Figure 17 reveals the state of the HBC trade in the region in 1800. It shows that a large portion of Albany's trade was in fact being produced in the Red River District, just beyond the boundaries of the Little North. Red River, however, was poor in beaver, while the posts within the Little North, including York's Oxford House, still maintained a relatively healthy proportion of beaver in their returns. The trade in and around East Winnipeg provided a substantial quantity of furs and still maintained a high proportion of beaver.

FIGURE 17: HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY FUR RETURNS, 1799-1800


N
YORK FACTORY
SEVERN HOUSE
OXFORD HOUSE
LAKE SANDERSON
POST DOUBTFUL
POINT AU FOUTRE
OSNABURGH
MARTIN'S FALL
ALBANY FORT
WEPINABAN
HENLEY HOUSE
LAKE ST. ANN'S
RED RIVER
* SHADED AREA REPRESENTS VALUE OF BEAVER SKINS
APPROXIMATE BOUNDARY OF ALBANY'S TRADE
APPROXIMATE DISTRICT BOUNDARIES
VALUE OF FUR RETURNS (MADE BEAVER)
10,000
5,000
2,500
1,000
0
100
200
MILES

SOURCES: HBCA, B.3/d/112; B.198/d/63; B.239/d/120

Chapter VII

THE HEIGHT OF FUR TRADE RIVALRY, 1800-05

John Linklater's death at Deer Lake in 1799 did not deter David Sanderson from his resolve to maintain a trading post in the East Winnipeg Country. In the summer of 1800 he dispatched his assistant, William Thomas, and six men with a batteau and orders to winter at the Sandy Narrows (present Stout Lake)[47] on the Berens River (the river at that time was known only as the Great or Grand River). Sanderson himself pushed northward with two canoes and seven men and reached his old house at Sandy Lake on 4 September 1800. There they met Thomas Sanderson and James Short who had traded about 200 made beaver in furs from the Sandy Lake Indians during the summer. Cameron and his Nor'Westers had not yet arrived, so Sanderson quickly assembled an outfit for a second post to be built to the north of Sandy Lake. Peter Taylor was chosen to lead four men to winter at the Lake of the Islands (present Island Lake), a place that Sanderson hoped would be free of competition.

For a while it seemed that Cameron would not make an appearance in the Lake Sanderson District, but on 28 September he arrived with nine men in a large north canoe. Several days later two more canoes bearing an additional ten men came to Cameron's post. Cameron immediately sent men to winter at Succar Lake (probably present Red Sucker Lake), Owl Lake, and the Lake of the Islands. The Nor'Westers once again held a manpower advantage over the Hudson's Bay Company in the district. Cameron's ability to establish outposts in several directions cut off many trading Indians from the HBC posts. Despite these circumstances Sanderson continued to bring in a healthy share of furs.

During the summer of 1801 the HBC men from Lake Sanderson District journeyed to Martin's Fall with their fur returns. Martin's Fall had become the main transfer point for outgoing furs and incoming trade goods. Albany's chief factor, John Hodgson, broke with tradition and began to make annual trips to the post to oversee the business for the company. He was also there to settle contract disputes that periodically arose among the inland men. On 30 June 1801 Hodgson met with the Lake Sanderson men, and several of them refused to return to that district. Hodgson observed, "their only reason is on account of the length of the carrying places, and excessive fatigue they undergo, in going and coming out - this is the more to be regretted, as there is a fine trade from that place this year" (HBCA, B.3/a/104, fo. 41d). The Lake Sanderson men were joined by men from other inland districts who complained of their situation. Hodgson summarized the labour unrest that he faced:

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[47] The location of Sandy Narrows was on present Stout Lake. D.B. Dowling who surveyed the Berens River in 1893 described it as Sandy Narrows Lake, and remarked: "On a point near the Sandy Narrows was some time ago located a trading post of the Hudson's Bay Company. This may have been the 'Albany House' marked on previous maps near this latitude" (Dowling 1894:29F).

> they tell me they are obliged to be on the Foot all the winter sometimes night and day, and obliged frequently to live with the Indians, and many times their living is miserable, this is certainly near the Truth, of which the inland Gentlemen acquaint me, this was not the case formerly when we had only 1 Company to oppose, now there is many, and parties from each opposition sett off altogether, he that arrives first at the tents has generally the best share of the furrs (ibid., fo. 44).

The only way that Hodgson could prevent a general strike that would have brought Albany's trade to a standstill was to increase the general level of the men's wages (ibid., fo. 44).

Sanderson's journal for the 1801-02 season has not survived, but it is evident from the Albany correspondence books and the later journals that he abandoned the Severn headwaters. Leaving the trade of that quarter entirely to Cameron and his Nor'Westers from Nipigon, he devoted his energies to developing the Berens River trade, a move that took him beyond Cameron's Nipigon Department and enabled him to tap the virgin country lying between Cameron and McKay's posts of the Lac Ouinipique Department which were located along Lake Winnipeg's eastern shore. Sanderson's post that year was located at the Great Fall (present Little Grand Rapids) on the Berens River.

In the Lac Ounipique Department, the Nor'Westers under the leadership of William McKay consolidated their hold on the trade. The HBC competition was led by Albany's Thomas Vincent who was stationed at Point au Foutre. Although Vincent managed to establish an outpost at the mouth of the Broken River (present Rice River) in the fall of 1800, it was immediately opposed by a larger North West Company post. William McKay had eleven large north canoes and approximately eighty men at his disposal. Vincent, on the other hand, had only twelve men and a small outfit of trading goods. XY Company traders also attempted to trade in the area, but they met with total failure in the 1800-1801 season. The XY men, five in number, abandoned their house at the bottom of the Winnipeg River in mid-September. According to Vincent, "the Little Company [XY] after selling a part of their goods last fall [1800] at half price abandoned their house and went to Red River finding they could not procure provisions at this accursed miserable place" (HBCA, B.4/a/4, fo. 12d).

The Nor'Westers dominated the Lake Winnipeg area not only by the strength of their numbers, but also by threats of violence. In the fall of 1800 Vincent was informed that McKay had sent word to all the Indians that he would shoot or hang any who attempted to enter the Hudson's Bay Company post (ibid., fo.4). McKay also endeavoured to procure the entire wild rice trade in the area and thereby starve out his competitors. This tactic was evidently successful against the XY men, but Vincent managed to secure an adequate supply of wild rice in the early fall. The competition for wild rice drove the price up, and Vincent later lamented that his large expenses for rice had hurt his fur returns later that year (ibid., fo. 12d).

Frustrated by the close-quartered competition at Point au Foutre, Vincent decided to move to another location in the fall of 1801. He took his men in two batteaux north along Lake Winnipeg's eastern shore. At the mouth of the Black River they met a party of Indians who promised to guide them to their winter hunting grounds. The Indians took Vincent and his men to Swan Thropple River (present Wanipagow River).[48] The river was full of rapids and the Hudson's Bay Company men had difficulty in moving the batteaux any great distance upriver. On the fifth day they came to a small lake called Turtle Lake (probably present Wallace Lake) where Vincent decided to build his post. The Nor'Westers did not find Vincent's post that year, but Indians reported several North West Company posts in the vicinity. Vincent had escaped the side-by-side competition, but he and his men passed a bleak winter at Turtle Lake. They were unsuccessful in laying up an adequate stock of fish, and they survived only because of the venison, wild rice, waterfowl, and fish provided by the Indians. Vincent brought out furs valued at about 2300 made beaver, but these had been obtained with considerable expense and physical exertion.

At the northern extremity of Lake Winnipeg the York traders were making efforts to settle posts and compete with the Nor'Westers. The post at the mouth of Gunisao River had been abandoned in the spring of 1799, but William Sinclair[49] established a more permanent post in the fall of 1798 at Holly Lake (present Oxford Lake). Named Oxford House, this post was designed to serve mainly as a trans-shipment centre and storage depot along the important Hayes River route. In the fall of 1799 an outpost was proposed for Jack Lake (present Gunisao Lake), a place Sinclair believed to be favourable for the fur trade. In his journal he wrote, "I flatter myself that this post will draw many natives from the poplar river with the produce of their hunt. The canadian traders is had that part of the country for those many years by past without any opposition which has been a great loss to Your Honours interest" (HBCA, B.156/a/2, fo. 18). James Halcro was placed in charge of the outfit for Jack Lake, but he could only get as far as Winnipeggooshish Lake (present Molson Lake) where he built his post. The Nor'Westers at Cross Lake sent eight men to build alongside Halcro, but they remained only two weeks. Halcro managed to obtain about 1000 made beaver in furs, and this satisfied the chief factor at York, John Ballenden, that a successful trade could be made in the region.

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[48] Peter Fidler surveyed and sketched the eastern shore of Lake Winnipeg in 1808. He placed "Swans thropple River" in the location of present Wanipagow River. Aaron Arrowsmith's map printed in 1819 depicted the Wanipagow as "Swain's Throttle River" (HBCA, E.3/3).

[49] William Sinclair was born about 1766 in Harra, in the Orkney Islands. He joined the HBC service in 1792 and was stationed at York Factory as a writer. He became an inland trader in 1794 and established several posts along the Nelson River. Sinclair was in charge of Oxford House for most of the years until his death on 20 April 1818. He left behind a large native-born family, many of whom continued in the fur trade service.

In the fall of 1801 William Sinclair sent six men in two large canoes to establish Jack Lake House. This time the Nor'Westers responded more vigorously, and the trade in furs was much less profitable. Sinclair wrote to Ballenden at York complaining that "the number of Canadian Houses that is all around this settlement [Jack Lake House] it is surprising that a skin is got at all they are encroaching every year nearer to us" (HBCA, B.239/b/67, fo. 13d). Despite the strong competition from the Nor'Westers, the York men returned to Jack Lake again in 1802-03. In the summer of 1803 the council at York Factory began to look more seriously at the country east and north of Lake Winnipeg as a fur trade district. William Sinclair was of the opinion that Island Lake should be the next location for a fur trade post. He sent a man from Oxford House to explore the route to Island Lake and wrote to Ballenden requesting additional geographical information about the area. In his letter he suggested that William Tomison might be able to recommend a place for a trading post based upon his explorations in 1767 and 1769 (HBCA, B.239/b/68, fo. 19). No mention was made of the Albany inland traders who had visited Island Lake in 1798-99 and operated a post there in 1800-01. It is clear that the men at York were unaware of the extent of Albany's inland expansion in this direction. In fact the council of senior officers at Albany were even unsure of the geographical situation of their own trading posts in the Lake Sanderson District.

York's Island Lake post was built in the fall of 1803 by Peter Whitford. In so doing the York men filled the gap that was left open by David Sanderson's decision to move his operations to the Berens River. Whitford was overwhelmed by North West Company opposition that year. Duncan Cameron wintered at Island Lake with twenty-six men who were continually sent to intercept furs at the Indian encampments around the lake. Cameron clearly wanted to drive the York traders out of the region, and was willing to pay the price in the short run. Whitford, an inexperienced trader, proved to be no match for the wily veteran. However, the officers at York realized the strategic importance of the Island Lake area. It was a buffer region that sheltered the bayside York Factory (and to some extent Severn House) and the transportation corridor along the Hayes River. The Island Lake post received added attention in 1804 after the appointment of Thomas McNab as chief factor at York. McNab had previously been employed as an inland trader at Albany. Although he had not wintered in the Lake Sanderson District, he was obviously familiar with the region. With his instructions to Charles Isham who succeeded Whitford as master of Island Lake House, McNab included a letter to Duncan Cameron, a former rival trader, and letters to his "old acquaintance," David Sanderson (HBCA, B.239/b/71, fo. 2).

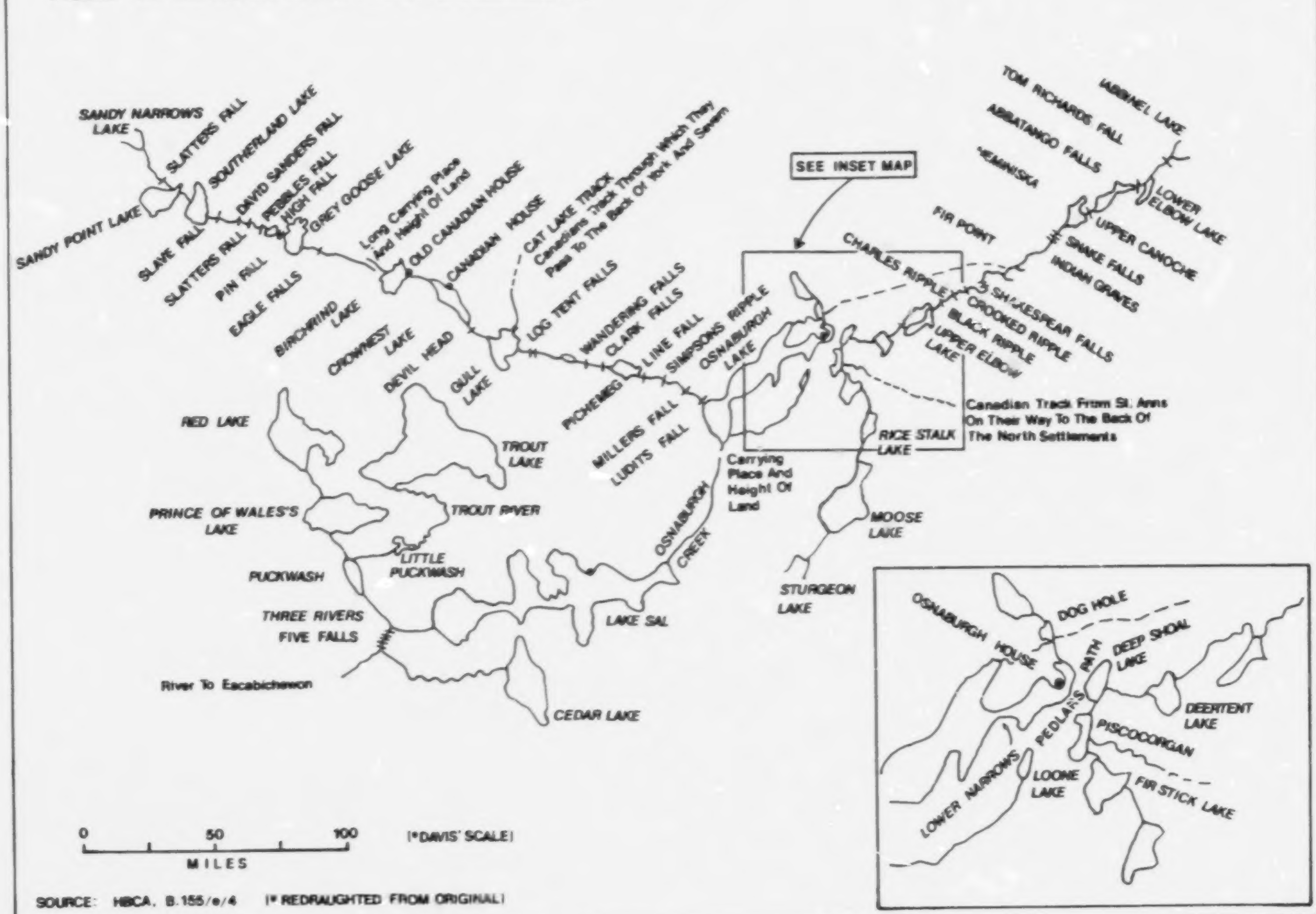
Charles Isham was the native-born son of James Isham, a former chief factor at York, and he had been an inland trader since 1774. He had served at Cumberland House, Swan River House, and Jack River House before being appointed to Island Lake (Brown 1983:450-51). McNab had a high opinion of Isham's abilities. As he wrote to him, "Your long servitude and knowledge of conciliating the affections of the Natives and trading with them causes your appointment to Island Lake where I trust you will display these qualifications" (HBCA, B.239/b/71, fo. 1). Isham's experience in the fur trade could not overcome the advantage that Cameron and his Nor'Westers had established at Island Lake. In January of 1805 a disconsolate Isham wrote to McNab that the "Indians are doing nothing but running about from house to house and indeed sir there is no beaver to be got... sir my opinion is to bring everything out in the spring" (ibid., fo. 5). McNab valued Isham's opinion, but he found the Island Lake area too important to leave entirely to the North West Company. Isham was subsequently recalled, but the York traders continued to operate posts in the Island Lake area.

The Albany inland trade in the early 1800s was concentrated along the eastern headwaters of the Lake Winnipeg drainage basin. In 1802 the HBC men abandoned the Point au Foutre District, and additional men and resources were sent to Red Lake and Lake Sanderson Districts. Thomas Vincent, formerly at Point au Foutre, assumed control of the Red Lake District. In his first year at Red Lake, Vincent was opposed by Jacques Adhémar, a North West Company clerk, who had four men. He also learned that the North West Company and the XY Company had trading posts at the mouth of the Bloodvein River. To counter them Vincent built a post the following year (1803) at Bad Lake on the headwaters of the Bloodvein River. Thomas McNab, junior, the native-born son of York Factory's chief factor, was placed in charge of the Bad Lake post. The Nor'Westers were prepared for this move and sent six men to winter beside McNab (HBCA, B.177/a/7, fo. 5). The Hudson's Bay Company men here, as in other parts of the Northwest, were frustrated by the numerically superior North West Company. The XY Company, which had met with little success in the Little North in previous years also began to make inroads in 1802 and 1803. In 1804 the XY men reached Red Lake and built a post beside the Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company. The XY traders were, in many ways, a greater concern to the Hudson's Bay Company than the old Nor'Westers. In particular, they were willing to trade goods at very cheap prices to gain a foothold in areas which had long been subject to duopolistic rivalry between the HBC men and the Nor'Westers from Montreal. Indians who had become intimately associated with one or the other of the old companies were lured away by the new company. Trading relationships were thrown into disarray as Indians travelled from post to post seeking the best price for their furs, provisions, and canoes.

Between Island Lake to the north and Red Lake to the south, the Albany traders pushed into the middle of the East Winnipeg Country along the Berens River. Led by David Sanderson, the Albany men used batteaux to transport their trade goods from Martin's Fall. Although by no means a sluggish river, the upper Berens was navigable by batteaux, and this advantage freed the Albany men from relying upon large canoes that were difficult and expensive to obtain. The first post on the Berens was built at Sandy Narrows in 1800 (see figs. 18 and 19). This was followed by a post at the Great Fall (present Little Grand Rapids, between Fishing and Family Lake) in 1801. In 1802 both posts were occupied, and an additional post was built to the north of the Berens on Windy Lake (present Favourable Lake at the head of Severn River). Commanded by Sanderson's eldest son John, who was a young man of twenty-four, the Windy Lake post was built to "please the Indians" (HBCA, B.18/a/1, fo. 1d). It was also an effective check upon Cameron's Nor'Westers who were situated in the Island Lake area. The Great Fall and Sandy Narrows posts were unopposed that year, and each received a large trade in furs. Altogether the Lake Sanderson District returns amounted to thirty-nine packs of furs (roughly 2,800 made beaver in value). The only competition in the area came from a North West Company post situated at the mouth of the Berens River. The Nor'Westers did not build a post upriver, but they competed with the Albany traders by sending men to winter among the Indians. David Sanderson countered this by sending his men to the Indian tents. His son David spent the entire spring at the camp of the Eagle, one of the Indians who had received a large supply of goods from Sanderson in the fall.

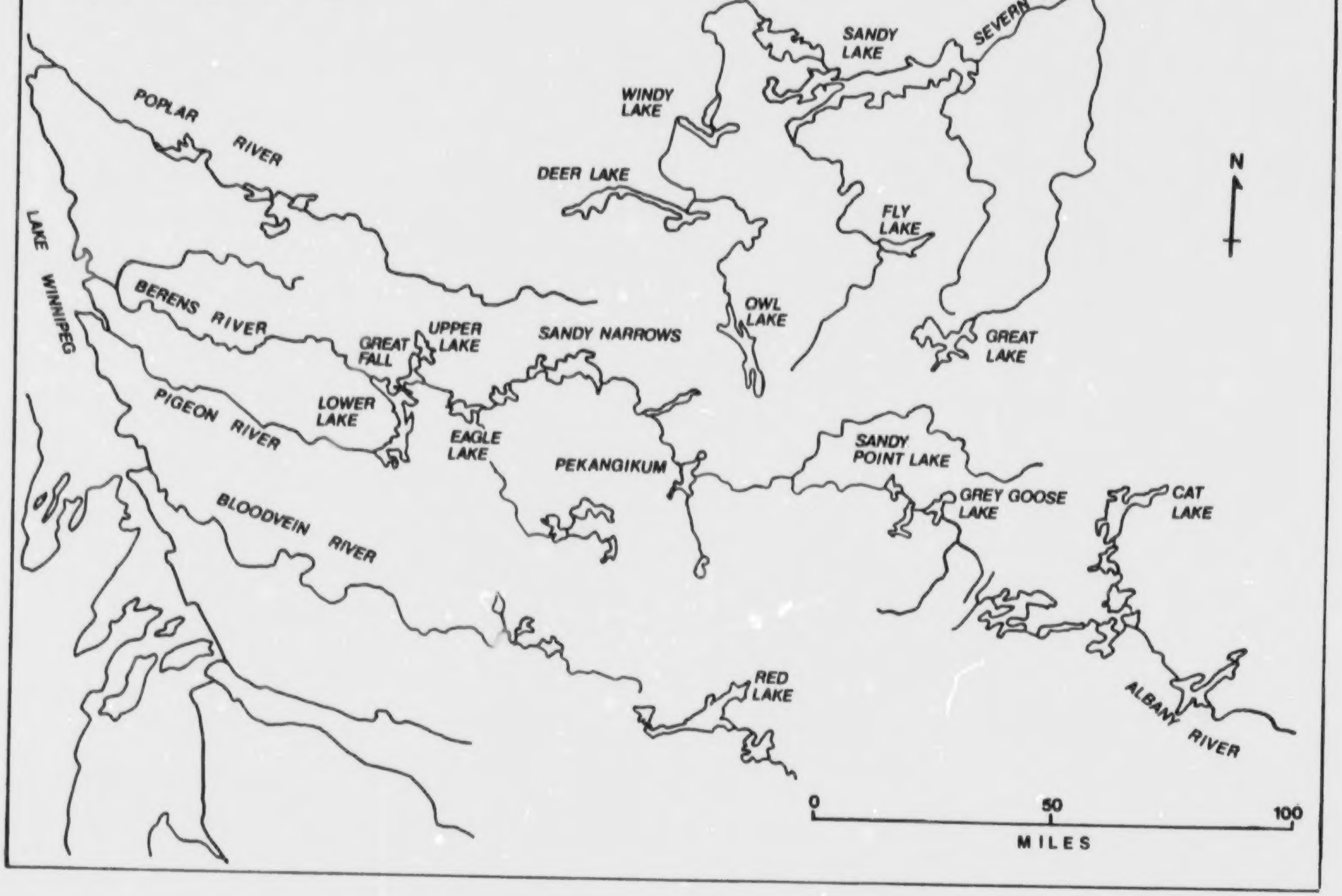
In 1803 the outpost at Sandy Narrows was abandoned. In its place Sanderson ordered a new post built on the Poplar River to the north and east of Great Fall. There was an easy canoe route from the Berens to the Poplar, and Sanderson paid several Indians to guide Jasper Corrigal (formerly master at Sandy Narrows) and four others in a batteau to a place called Rice Lake by the Indians. Corrigal got only as far as Lower Rice Lake (probably present Eardley Lake) where the Indians refused to take him farther. In all likelihood it would have been impossible to travel much farther in the batteau, but Corrigal believed the Indians had left him at Lower Rice Lake, a poor fishing lake, so they could trade wild rice and venison to the Albany men at high prices (HBCA, B.18/a/2, fo. 3). At Great Fall House Sanderson had to contend once more with the Nor'Westers at the mouth of Berens River. There may have been more men at this post, and perhaps several outposts (or XY posts) in the area. According to George Nelson, Angus Bethune wintered at the mouth of the Pigeon River for the XY Company in 1803-04 (Nelson Reminiscences 5:209). The "Canadian" posts, Sanderson wrote, "is so many the Indians informs me that these canadians trade the beaver with them where they kill them" (HBCA, B.18/a/2, fo. 5). The outpost at Windy Lake, headed again by John Sanderson, was opposed by a North West Company post under the management of a "Mr. [John] Munro" (Masson 1960, vol. 2:295). Cameron had sent Munro to bother Sanderson in the hopes of driving the Albany men out of this northern flank of the Nipigon Department.

FIGURE 18: JOHN DAVIS' MAP OF OSNABURGH DISTRICT, 1816


SANDY NARROWS LAKE
SANDY POINT LAKE
SLATTERS FALL
SOUTHERLAND LAKE
DAVID SANDERS FALL
PEBBLES FALL
HIGH FALL
GREY GOOSE LAKE
SLAVE FALL
SLATTERS FALL
PIN FALL
EAGLE FALLS
Long Carrying Place And Height Of Land
OLD CANADIAN HOUSE
CANADIAN HOUSE
CAT LAKE TRACK
Canadians Track Through Which They Pass To The Back Of York And Severn
BIRCHRIND LAKE
CROWNEST LAKE
DEVIL HEAD
GULL LAKE
LOG TENT FALLS
WANDERING FALLS
CLARK FALLS
LINE FALL
SIMPSONS RIPPLE
OSNABURGH LAKE
PICHEMEG
MILLERS FALL
LUDITS FALL
RED LAKE
TROUT LAKE
TROUT RIVER
PRINCE OF WALES'S LAKE
LITTLE PUCKWASH
PUCKWASH
THREE RIVERS
FIVE FALLS
River To Eacabichewon
CEDAR LAKE
LAKE SAL
OSNABURGH CREEK
Carrying Place And Height Of Land
SEE INSET MAP
RICE STALK LAKE
MOOSE LAKE
STURGEON LAKE
Canadian Track From St. Anns On Their Way To The Back Of The North Settlements
CHARLES RIPPLE
FIR POINT
SHAKESPEAR FALLS
CROOKED RIPPLE
BLACK RIPPLE
UPPER ELBOW LAKE
INDIAN GRAVES
SNAKE FALLS
UPPER CANOCHE
LOWER ELBOW LAKE
TOM RICHARDS FALL
ABBATANGO FALLS
*EMINISKA
IABBINEL LAKE
OSNABURGH HOUSE
DOG HOLE
DEEP SHOAL LAKE
PATH
PEDLARS
DEERTENT LAKE
PISCOCORGAN
LOONE LAKE
FIR STICK LAKE
LOWER NARROWS
0
50
100
MILES
(*DAVIS' SCALE)

SOURCE: HBCA, B.155/e/4 (* REDRAUGHTED FROM ORIGINAL)

FIGURE 19: BERENS RIVER


SANDY LAKE
SEVERN R.
WINDY LAKE
POPLAR RIVER
DEER LAKE
N
FLY LAKE
LAKE WINNIPEG
BERENS RIVER
OWL LAKE
GREAT FALL
UPPER LAKE
SANDY NARROWS
GREAT LAKE
LOWER LAKE
PIGEON RIVER
EAGLE LAKE
PEKANGIKUM
SANDY POINT LAKE
GREY GOOSE LAKE
CAT LAKE
BLOODVEIN RIVER
RED LAKE
ALBANY RIVER
0
50
100
MILES

The Lake Sanderson brigade brought a substantial trade of forty-four packs of furs and one rundlet (a small barrel) of "castor" (castoreum - a substance used mainly in perfume and derived from the perineal glands of the beaver) to Martin's Fall in the summer of 1804 (HBCA, B.155/a/18, fo. 12d). Albany's chief, John Hodgson, again met with labour unrest from the Lake Sanderson men. This time complaints were made by those men who were native-born sons of the inland Albany traders. They were led by three of David Sanderson's sons: John, David, Jr., and Thomas. Hodgson was deeply troubled by this problem because these men could not easily be replaced. Possibly the first HBC man to describe such native sons as halfbreed, he wrote in his journal:

> the greatest trouble I have experienced this year is from the Half Breed or Creoles, who complain their Wages are much less than others, and as they are all Boat Steerers they think they have a right to better wages than they have. Mr. Sanders[on] has 3 stout sons who all steer Boats, besides there is Hugh Linklater [son of John Linklater], and John Kipling [jr.]; all stout men. They act as Interpreters and are in every respect most useful people, for they hunt equally as well as the Natives, and it is by their endeavours frequently in hunting, the several Posts fare much better than they otherwise would do without them. I cannot get a man to undertake to steer a Boat, I have tried these 2 years, but have got only one George Spence, they universally refuse to undertake the charge among the Falls, and as the Old Boat Steeres times are, or near, out, I wish to be bringing up a few young hands (HBCA, B.3/a/106, fo. 44).

As a result, John Sanderson's wages were raised from twenty to twenty-five pounds; David, Jr. received an increase from six to twenty pounds; and Thomas's wages rose from six to eighteen pounds per year (HBCA, B.3/d/112, 117).

The XY Company made its appearance in the Lake Sanderson District in the fall of 1804. When David Sanderson reached Great Fall House on 2 September 1804, he was informed by James Slater, Hugh Cragie, William Cragie, and James Sanderson who passed the summer at the post that a large party of Canadian traders was headed for Great Fall. On 17 September two large XY canoes reached the bottom of the waterfall (located about six miles west of the HBC post). The XY trader, Alexander Campbell, visited the HBC post and told Sanderson that he intended to build a post at the foot of the fall. One week later Sanderson received a visit from a North West Company trader, "McDonald" (probably Alexander McDonell), who told him that he was going to build his post alongside the Hudson's Bay Company. This proved false, for McDonell and his men settled at the "Little Grand Rapid" (probably present Night Owl Rapids). When Campbell, the XY trader, perceived the weakness of his position, he wrote to Sanderson seeking to join forces in opposition to the Nor'Westers. Sanderson refused to make such a deal on the grounds that he did not have the authority to do so (HBCA, B.18/a/3, fo. 3d). His decision may have also been influenced by the Hudson's Bay Company's general distrust of the XY Company. In a circular sent to its bayside factories the London Committee had underlined the following in 1799:

> We understand that a New North West Company is established at Montreal to oppose us and the present Canadians [NWC]. We know from experience what our former opponents can or in short will do, but as to the New Company they may (under the notion of out trading us both) ruin the trade altogether. We therefore think it advisable for our servants to incline towards our old competitors rather than give any countenance to the New and by thus shewing a partiality and keeping up a good understanding with the Canadians who are of course far more powerfull than the New Adventurers can be, it may eventually be the means of this New Company relinquishing their Enterprizes entirely (HBCA, A.6/16, fo. 70).

Sanderson's refusal to join forces with the XY Company posed one serious disadvantage for the Albany traders. They could not take their heavy batteaux over or around the falls (the vertical drop of the falls is about thirty-five feet [Low 1886:7f]), and this prevented them from building an outpost beside the Canadians in the fall of 1804.

Sanderson had earlier sent men to posts at Owl Lake (present McInnes Lake at the headwaters of the Severn River) and Rice Lake (present Harrop Lake on the Poplar River). James Slater was placed in charge of the Rice Lake expedition; but like Corrigal the year before he was unable to reach the lake and settled instead on Stony Lake (also called Stone Indian Lake - present Assinika Lake) only fifteen miles from Great Fall House. Slater was bothered by Canadian traders (NWC and possibly XYC) who had settled at the bottom of Poplar River. He had also to contend with "Indians from Montreale" (Iroquois) who had been hired by the Nor'Westers and possibly the XY Company to trap furs in the East Winnipeg Country (HBCA, B.18/a/3, fo. 8). The presence of Iroquois trappers in the region placed great pressure on the population of fur bearers, a stress that was already beginning to diminish the fur returns within the Lake Sanderson District.

The outpost at Owl Lake was managed by John Sanderson. His opponent that year was none other than Duncan Cameron, proprietor of the Nipigon Department. Since 1796 Cameron had wintered in the Sandy Lake area, and in the early 1800s his men had established a number of posts in the vicinity. Cameron acknowledged that prior to 1796 the Hudson's Bay Company was "carrying all before them" (Masson 1960, vol. 2:244), but in the following years Cameron claimed that he "always got a larger share of the trade than any of the English [HBC] who were alongside of me" (ibid., p. 280).

Cameron and his men, including at least one Iroquois[50] (ibid., p.295), set off from Lake Nipigon on 16 August 1804. The first night they camped at Portage la Petite Chute (Portage of the Little Falls). Canoe travel was extremely difficult because the water levels in the rivers and streams were low and this made part of the route impassable. This fact was noted in David Sanderson's journal for 1804-05, and in several other Hudson's Bay Company documents. The low water probably reflected unusually warm and dry weather conditions during the summer of 1804.[51] During the next week progress was slow as numerous portages had to be made. Among the longest were Grande Vase (Big Mud), La Pêche au Chavaudreuil (Chavaudreuil's Fishing Place), and Portage la Savanne (Barren Portage). On 23 August they reached Lake la Savanne (probably present Savant Lake), and a day later they camped near Lake St. Joseph at a place called Butte de Sable (Sand Hill). From there Cameron and some of his men visited Osnaburgh House and were "very politely received by Mr. [Robert] Goodwin, second Factor of Albany Fort" (ibid., p. 272). Goodwin recorded this meeting on 25 August 1804: "Mr. Duncan Cameron and Mr. Dugal [John Dugald] Cameron with sixteen men came to the house, at the same time 3 sons of the Crane[52] came in to spy the place.... Mr. Cameron has 7 canoes, he informs me he is going beyond Mr. Sanderson and Mr. Dugal Cameron he intends to leave at Cat Lake which will hurt this house very much" (HBCA, B.155/a/19, fo. 3d). Cameron spent the night at Osnaburgh House, and during his stay he tried to draw the Crane's sons to trade their furs with him. Cameron admitted in his journal that this was not gentlemanly behaviour, but he reasoned that "it is a very common custom in this country, which nothing but the nature of the trade can excuse" (Masson 1960, vol. 2:273).

Cameron did not leave any men to winter in opposition to Osnaburgh House. Instead he pressed on quickly toward Sandy Lake. At Lac des Ecorces (Bark Lake, probably present Birch Lake) Cameron left Régiste Bellefleur and four men to build a trading post. Among the Indians who lived nearby, the most influential man was named "Cotton Shirt." Cameron described him as the best hunter in the whole department, and one who had been faithful to the North West Company (ibid., p. 277). Cotton Shirt and his "gang" of Indians, like the Crane and his group, were important traders whose allegiance was sought by both companies. One of Cotton Shirt's elder brothers was a Hudson's Bay Company trading captain. Cameron related that this Indian regarded himself as the master who acted as the "landlord" at Osnaburgh House. Indians were recognized as chiefs when they were able to secure a large amount of furs for trade. According to Cameron, this rank afforded them little influence other than at the times when they were able to share extra liquor, ammunition or tobacco with their friends (ibid., p. 277).

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[50] The register of men employed in the Lake Nipigon Department for 1805-06 included an Iroquois, Paul Orontagonga. Another Indian named "Saganahoces, Nipissingne" was also among the Nipigon Nor'Westers (PAC, MG 19 C1, vol. 55:45-55).

[51] The climatic conditions of 1804-05 have been studied by D.D. Kemp. He has found that the years 1804 and 1805 in the Canadian Northwest were marked by extremely low precipitation which produced drought conditions over large areas (Kemp 1982:34-41).

[52] The Crane was a principal trading Indian who frequented Osnaburgh House in the early 1800s. The HBC traders reported that the Crane had a "gang" which consisted of fourteen sons and several sons-in-law (Rogers and Black-Rogers 1983:93).

On 4 September 1804 Cameron and the rest of his party left Lac des Ecorces and met Jean-Baptiste Sauvé, a "half-gentleman" (Cameron's term probably means that he was métis) who had spent the summer at "Big Lake" (probably the same as Albany's Great Lake - present Macdowell Lake) with Allan McFarlane. Cameron appointed Sauvé and four men to build a post on a lake (name not given in Masson's edition of Cameron's journal) two days' journey from Lac des Ecorces. Because of the extremely low water levels Cameron hurried to reach his wintering place. Before reaching McFarlane's post on Big Lake, Cameron's party split up. Joseph Monier and John Munro took the northern route through Big Lake and toward Island Lake where Munro was to winter. Monier built his post on Owl Lake, but this was evidently not the same lake known to the Hudson's Bay Company as Owl Lake. Cameron branched off to the west with "a heavy loaded canoe, with which I intend to attempt this bad road, to get alongside my old neighbours, the English, in the hope of taking a few packs from them, in order to help me to keep up the usual average of returns from this Department, which would be impossible were I to confine myself within the usual limits, as beaver is getting too scarce" (ibid., p. 288). These remarks indicated that Cameron was venturing into new territory, and possibly encroaching on lands within the rough limits of the Lac Ouinipique Department.

The route Cameron took to his wintering ground proved to be as treacherous as he had anticipated. The weather turned cold, and the shallow rivers began to freeze. In one incident, the bottom of the canoe was torn open by a sharp rock and many of the trade goods were irreparably damaged. Finally, in early October, amid snow and ice, they reached the lake known as Owl Lake by the Albany traders (present McInnes Lake). The HBC men had not yet finished building their post, but they were surprised at Cameron's arrival so late in the season, and at such a remote place. The Albany trader in charge of the Owl Lake post was John Sanderson. Cameron and Sanderson seem to have tolerated one another, but there was no great affection between them. In his journal Cameron accused Sanderson of giving too much liquor to the Indians, and of being drunk himself. These comments foreshadowed Sanderson's death in 1809 which was related to alcohol abuse.

Cameron's twenty years' experience made him an astute observer of the effects of the trade upon the Indians and the environment, and on the returns of his Nipigon Department at this time.

> The Indians have lost all industry and are becoming careless about hunting and paying their credits, as they very well know that when one will refuse, another more extravagant will readily give.... I am sorry to say that, even if there were no opposition at all in the country to spoil the trade, it is now getting so barren and poor that in a dozen years hence, the returns from it will be so trifling that, even if one company had the whole, on the cheapest terms, it will be little enough to pay the expenses of carrying on the business, for the hunt is declining very fast, and we are obliged every year to make new discoveries and settle new posts. Even with all that, we cannot keep the former average of returns, although the consummation of goods is increasing every year, and I believe that our discoveries are now about at an end, and that the trade cannot be extended much further than it is at present (ibid., p. 296-297).

Cameron's prophecies that the geographical limits to the trade would soon be reached and that returns would dwindle to nothing in twelve years began to ring true shortly after 1805. Virtually every fur region within the Little North had been tapped by 1805, and the pressure of sustained and generally increasing trapping had clearly reduced the resources within much of the region. Cameron's observations were echoed by David Sanderson, who wrote on 22 May 1805: "the Trade of this quarter is much shortened by reason of many oppositions from Canadians which is the confusion of the Indians as we vie with each other who can throw away the most of our employers property on them before any return can be made" (HBCA, B.239/b/73, fo. 6).

Chapter VIII

A DESPERATE STRUGGLE: NORTH WEST AND HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY COMPETITION, 1805-10

During the winter of 1804-05 negotiations in Montreal led to the absorption of the XY Company by the North West Company. The reorganized North West Company was controlled by McTavish, Frobisher and Company, but twenty-five percent of the shares were given to former XY partners. Economic forces were the main reason for the XY people to join with the Nor'Westers. Another factor that is often cited is the death of Simon McTavish on 5 November 1804. McTavish had presided over the affairs of the North West Company since 1787, and he had been actively opposed to any agreement with the XY Company. It is also apparent that he was prepared to take losses in the fur trade in order to crush his opponents from Montreal (Wallace 1934:19). The decision to take control of the XY Company was made by McTavish's nephew, William McGillivray. In February 1805 the news of the union reached the Northwest, and men who had been bitter rivals joined together for the remainder of the season. The Hudson's Bay Company received this news with mixed reactions. It was hoped to signal an end to the ruinous escalation of prices for furs and limit the use of liquor in trade. But the HBC men rightly feared that the union of the Montreal companies would create a more powerful and organized opponent whose assets would be directed entirely at ruining the Hudson's Bay Company.

The competition for furs in the East Winnipeg Country did not ease with the demise of the XY Company. In the fall of 1805 the Albany men encountered stiff opposition from the Nor'Westers at all of their posts. The HBC trade in the Lake Sanderson District was also affected by the transfer of David Sanderson to Osnaburgh House. In his place John Hodgson, chief factor at Albany, sent William Thomas. Thomas was relatively inexperienced at inland trading, and certainly lacked the leadership skills of David Sanderson. Three of Sanderson's sons accompanied the Lake Sanderson brigade, and these men helped Thomas overcome many of the problems he faced during the winter of 1805-06. The first problem involved transporting the men and equipment to Great Fall House. Thomas attempted to travel entirely with batteaux, and this proved difficult as the water levels remained low throughout the fall of 1805. He was unable to reach Great Fall, and built another post instead at Eagle Lake (present Moar Lake) about twenty-five miles east of his intended destination. In frustration he later wrote, "the Canadians [NWC] have a great advantage over us with their canoes as they can go in any part of the Country and that we cannot with Boats" (HBCA, B.57/a/1, fo. 5d). Thomas had also planned to build a post on the Poplar River, but that too was impossible. The Nor'Westers took advantage of this situation by building posts below Great Fall and on the Poplar River at Rice Lake.

Since the trade west of Great Fall was lost to the Nor'Westers, Thomas decided to outfit two outposts to the north and east. James Slater was placed in charge of the Deer Lake post located on the upper Severn, and John Crear was sent upriver to Sandy Point Lake (present Goose Lake) (see fig. 19). The fur trade from these posts, however, was trifling and indeed the whole country appeared to have been exhausted of furs. As Thomas wrote on 19 January 1806, for example, "an Indian family arrived brought 30 Br [made beaver] they inform me they have been starving all the winter and could not find any Beaver this part of the country being entirely hunted up" (HBCA, B.57/a/1, fo. 9). The Albany men continued to pay dearly for furs to keep the Indians away from the Nor'Westers, and presents of liquor seemed to be the only means to attract trade.

To the south, at Red Lake and the headwaters of the Bloodvein, Albany trader William Corrigal was opposed by a large and unruly outfit of Nor'Westers. The main trading post for each company was established on Bad Lake; Corrigal had five men and a large canoe, and John Haldane, formerly a wintering partner of the XY Company, had seventeen men and two large and two small canoes. During the winter, the Nor'Westers armed themselves and forced their way into the Albany posts at Red Lake and Bad Lake, robbing the entire stock of furs from the Bad Lake post. Haldane, confident of his superiority, told Corrigal plainly, "he had come for furrs and furrs he would have if they should come from Hell" (HBCA, B.244/a/1, fo. 7d). The reasons for these acts of aggression are not clear, but it is evident that the decline of furs from the region had, in part, prompted Haldane and his men to rob the HBC posts. In addition, the union of the XY and the North West companies had created a surplus of men in the district. For example, Corrigal noted that there were upwards of fifty men at the NWC post at Lac Seul in the spring of 1806 (HBCA, B.244/a/1, fo. 10d). These men easily outnumbered the Hudson's Bay Company men and were likely emboldened by their superior strength. They may also have been competing among themselves to improve their positions in the newly overcrowded North West Company.

Following the absorption of the XY Company, William McKay remained in charge of the North West Company's Lac Ouinipique Department. In 1805 he brought in thirteen large canoes from Kaministiquia, and had eighty-five men under his command. He wintered at a post on Cross Lake, located just north of Lake Winnipeg. Within the department there were at least eight posts. These included the depot at Bas-de-la-Rivière Ouinipique which was managed by Charles Ermatinger. At Lac du Bonnet a post was built by Louis Perigny. He was assisted by George Nelson, a former XY trader, whose job that season was "ecrivin" or writer (Nelson 1805-06:1). Another post headed by Dominique Ducharme was located about fifty miles east of Lac du Bonnet (probably at Portage de l'Isle). Around Lake Winnipeg there were posts at "Tête-au-Brochet" (present Jack Head) managed by "Mr. Ferguson" (probably Alexander Farquharson), "Pike River" (present

Gunisao River) under the charge of "Mr. Venables," "Lake la Folle Avoine" or Rice Lake (present Harrop Lake on the Poplar River) headed by John McPhail, Pigeon River under François Richard, and Broken River (present Rice River) commanded by Alexander Campbell (ibid., pp. 1-6).

Duncan Cameron was still the proprietor in charge of the Nipigon Department. According to a North West Company ledger for the year 1805, there were nine clerks employed in the department (PAC, MG 19 C1, vol. 55:11). Among the other sixty men listed, six were identified as interpreters, one as a guide, nine as "foremen" (men who paddled in the bow of the canoe), eleven as "steersmen," and thirty-three as "middlemen" (who paddled in the middle of the canoe). The interpreters were also classified in one of the canoe categories. The wages of the clerks ranged from 240 to 1200 livres per year, the interpreters were paid between 500 to 600 livres, the guide earned 800 livres, the foremen received between 400 to 800 livres, steersmen 400 to 700 livres, and middlemen 350 to 500 livres. The clerks in the Nipigon Department for 1805-06 were John Dugald Cameron, Roderick McKenzie, John Munro, John Pritchard, Roderick Morrison, John Stitt, Allan McFarlane, Pierre Dumas, and Richard D. Fraser (ibid.).

In 1805 the Nipigon Department was subdivided into the "Red Lake and Lac Seul Department." The proprietor in charge was John Haldane, who became a wintering partner in the North West Company in 1805 (Wallace 1934:453). For the 1805-06 season he had twenty-nine men, including two clerks (Aulay McAulay and Louis Blette), four interpreters, and one guide (PAC, MG 19 C1, vol. 55:11).

Thus, in 1805-06, the North West Company had 186 men and at least twenty trading posts in these three departments (see fig. 20). The Hudson's Bay Company had far fewer men and posts in roughly the same area. Of its five districts, three operated from Albany Fort and two from York Factory. The Albany districts were Osnaburgh, Red Lake, and Lake Sanderson. The York districts comprised Oxford House and Merry's House.[53] In these five districts the Hudson's Bay Company operated nine trading posts and employed fifty-seven men (HBCA, B.3/d/117; B.239/d/132). Its men were outnumbered by more than three to one in this region, a figure that probably was reflected in the comparative fur returns of the two companies.

By the fall of 1806 water levels began to rise in rivers and lakes throughout the Little North. Transportation problems eased for the Albany men who journeyed to Lake Sanderson District. William Thomas returned as the leader of the district. Despite the improved water conditions, he brought a large canoe in addition to two batteaux. The party of fifteen men set out from Osnaburgh House on 2 August 1806, and reached the headwaters of the Berens River sixteen days later. At

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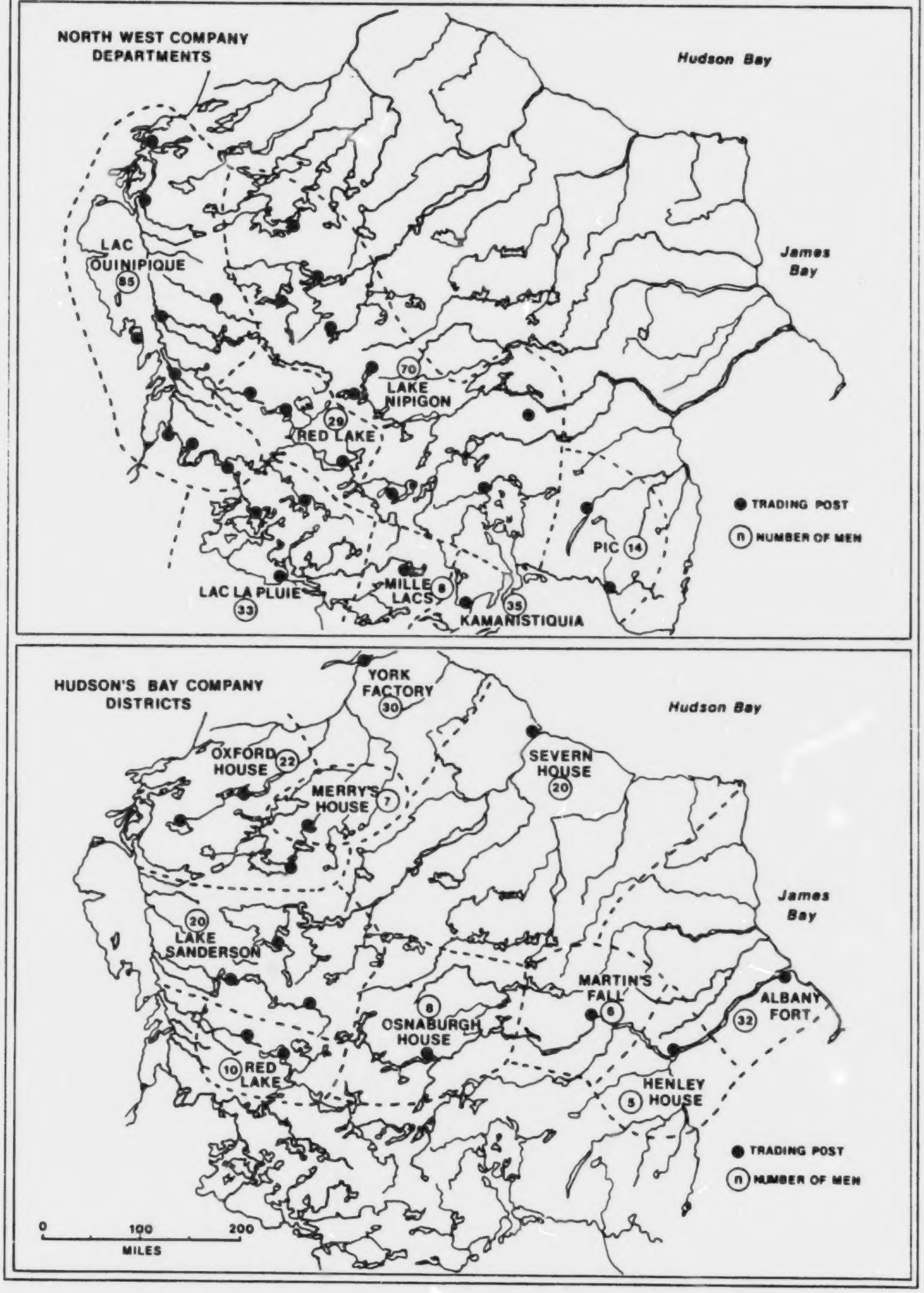
[53] Merry's House was built in the fall of 1801 on present Sharpe Lake, about fifty miles north of Island Lake. It was named after Charles Merry, a member of the Hudson's Bay Company's London Committee.

FIGURE 20: NWC AND HBC TRADING DISTRICTS, 1805-06


NORTH WEST COMPANY DEPARTMENTS
Hudson Bay
James Bay
LAC OUINIPIQUE
85
70
LAKE NIPIGON
29
RED LAKE
PIC
14
LAC LA PLUIE
33
MILLE LACS
8
35
KAMANISTIQUIA
TRADING POST
n NUMBER OF MEN
HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY DISTRICTS
YORK FACTORY
30
Hudson Bay
OXFORD HOUSE
22
MERRY'S HOUSE
7
SEVERN HOUSE
20
James Bay
20
LAKE SANDERSON
MARTIN'S FALL
6
ALBANY FORT
32
8
OSNABURGH HOUSE
10
RED LAKE
HENLEY HOUSE
5
TRADING POST
n NUMBER OF MEN
0
100
200
MILES

Grey Goose Lake (present Upper Goose Lake)[54] Thomas left James Slater and five men to build a post. Sandy Narrows House, which had been occupied by several Albany men during the summer, was reached on 28 August. It was abandoned for the winter and the party pushed on to the Great Fall. There Thomas left John Crear and five men to pass the winter. Thomas obtained an additional canoe at Great Fall, and so with two canoes he took seven men to the Poplar River to build another post. They reached Rice Lake (present Harrop Lake) on 9 September, and "found the Indians making Rice [harvesting wild rice] gave them a treat of Brandy and traded about 80 gls of Rice." The Indians asked Thomas "to winter in Brandy Lake about two days journey from this place" (HBCA, B.217/a/1, fo. 2). Thomas complied with their wish and proceeded to Brandy Lake (present Wrong Lake). The men began to build a post on the lake, but news of a North West Company post located a short distance downriver caused them to give it up after three weeks. On 5 October they removed to Thunder Lake (present Weaver Lake) and built beside the Nor'Westers who were led by Charles Ermatinger (Nelson, Sorel Journal:73). Thomas also dispatched three men in one of the canoes to build an outpost beside the North West Company post at the mouth of the Poplar River. Peter Fidler, the HBC surveyor who charted the east coast of Lake Winnipeg in 1808, found the remains of this post which was located on the north side of Poplar River (HBCA, E.3/3, fo. 63). Despite these vigorous measures by the Albany traders, the fur returns were dismal. The two posts on the Poplar managed to procure only 754 made beaver, and Thomas reported that "furrs of every kind are very scarce in this quarter" (HBCA, B.217/a/1. fo. 5).

At Great Fall, the fight for the few remaining furs reached its zenith. In October, the Nor'Wester "Alexander McDonald" (probably McDonell) and five men forced their way into the Albany house occupied at the time by John Crear and William Ploughman. McDonald demanded their furs, and when Ploughman resisted McDonald drew his cutlass and stabbed him in the arm. The Nor'Westers then ransacked the post, taking furs, provisions, and a canoe. The vulnerable HBC men were victimized a second time in January when the Nor'Westers forced their way into the post and took more furs and provisions. After this second incident the Albany men, fearing for their lives, refused to stay at Great Fall and joined Thomas at Thunder (Weaver) Lake.

Armed conflict with the Nor'Westers was not the only problem faced by the Albany men in the Lake Sanderson District. On 19 January 1807 two Indians arrived at Thomas's Thunder Lake post with a letter from York Factory trader Thomas Swain. Swain had built his post in the fall of 1806 on Jack Lake (present Gunisao Lake) which was only two days' journey by snowshoe from Thunder Lake (York traders also had posts at Island Lake, Merry's House - north of Island Lake, and Winnipeggooshish). In the letter Swain accused Thomas of encroaching on territory that was within York Factory's hinterland. Thomas replied: "I conceive myself not in the least accountable to you for any part of my conduct any further remonstrance from you will not be attended to" (HBCA, B.217/a/1, fo. 8d).

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[54] D.B. Dowling reported to the Geological Survey of Canada in 1893 that the Algonquian translation of Upper Goose Lake was "the lake where they kill geese" (Dowling 1894:30F).

This clash between Thomas and Swain touched off a debate during the summer of 1807 between the chief factors of York and Albany about which of them should conduct the trade in the East Winnipeg Country. York's chief, Thomas McNab, wrote in a polite manner to John Hodgson at Albany Fort: "you will see with me the impropriety of our striving against each other - or of you sending so far to a spot we can reach in few less days than you can weeks" (HBCA, B.239/b/76, fo. 25). Hodgson agreed with McNab, and gave orders to abandon the Poplar River posts if the York traders came into the region in the fall of 1807. William Thomas agreed to this decision, but he wrote to McNab at York expressing doubts that any post would succeed:

> from the knowledge I have of this part of the country together with my poor success here this year makes me think it will scarcely be of any advantage establishing a Post within the vicinity of this place as the Beaver are very scarce and the Indians are all meaning to go to different places to hunt next year (HBCA, B.239/b/76, fo. 33d).

Despite Thomas's negative assessment, an outfit from York was prepared in 1807 under the direction of Alexander Kennedy. Thomas McNab, the York chief, ordered Kennedy to build a post at Big Fall where the Albany men had wintered, observing, "a slight Geographic glance, point[s] out the Superior ease of its supplies from York, and as the chief at Albany justly observes, our general attention should be regulated by these circumstances" (HBCA, B.239/b/75, fo. 7). Kennedy was accompanied by George Spence who had been previously employed at Albany, and had wintered several times at Great Fall House. Spence drew a map showing the canoe route from Great Fall to the mouth of the Poplar River (HBCA, E.3/4, fo. 18d). Although it revealed little more than the actual canoe route, it did point out that Lake Winnipeg was only eleven days' journey from Great Fall.

By 1807 it was evident to the HBC officers at York Factory and Severn House that Albany's inland expansion had reached into areas that could be better prosecuted from other vantages. In addition to East Winnipeg, the York traders made plans to replace the Albany men along the Red and Assiniboine River valleys. At Severn House, Thomas Thomas devised an inland trading scheme in the spring of 1807 that would establish posts near the headwaters of the Severn River. Since the abandonment of this area by the Albany traders in 1801, the trade had largely gone to the Nipigon Nor'Westers who had maintained several posts in the vicinity of Sandy Lake. In particular, a NWC post built on Trout Lake (present Big Trout Lake) in 1803 had reduced the fur returns at Severn House, and this prompted Thomas to send men inland (HBCA, B.198/e/1, fo. 5d).

The Severn outfit was led by James Swain, brother of York's Thomas Swain. The party consisted of eleven men in two boats (possibly batteaux), and they were guided by several Indians. They left Severn House on 11 June 1807, and proceeded up the Severn River to its confluence with the Fawn River (see fig. 21). Travel was difficult and much time was spent tracking the boats by line past rapids and shallow stretches of the river. On 4 July 1807 they entered Trout Lake which Swain described as "a very large lake, the shores very high and rocky" (HBCA, B.220/a/1, fo. 8d). They skirted the lake on the south side for about five miles and landed on a fine sandy bay where they found the remains of a Canadian post that had been deserted for two or three years.[55] There was little wood available for building, but Swain decided to establish his post (which measured forty by twenty-two feet) near the old Canadian house. Swain named his post Beaver Lodge after the fine quality beaver pelts that were obtained from the surrounding area. These pelts were judged to be "equal at least in value to any in this country" (ibid., fo. 55d). The Trout Lake area was one of the few remaining places where beaver were still relatively abundant. The Nor'Westers arrived on 11 October 1807 and built their post about twenty miles to the west.

During the winter, Swain experienced many of the same problems that had plagued Albany's inland traders. His men were ill-prepared for the hardships of wintering at a small, isolated post. Swain had hoped to alleviate this problem by bringing with him Jasper Corrigal, who had previously been employed in Albany's inland trade (ibid., fo. 19d). Corrigal had been in charge of several trading posts in Lake Sanderson District during the early 1800s, and appeared to be a suitable assistant for Swain. However, Corrigal did not get along well with Swain, and he was sent back to Severn in midwinter. Swain petitioned Thomas Thomas for an assistant who was capable of trading with Indians and living in the boreal forest environment. Thomas had no such man at Severn, so he wrote to John McNab at York requesting a suitable person to assist Swain. McNab consented and sent Thomas Swain to join his brother James at Severn in the summer of 1808.

Thomas Swain journeyed from York Factory to Severn House by way of Lake Winnipeg. He travelled in a canoe with two other men and reached the mouth of the Poplar River in the middle of June 1808 (Peter Fidler met Swain near the mouth of Mukatawa River on 11 June 1808 - HBCA, E.3/3, fo. 63). They paddled upriver to the headwaters of the Poplar, and then crossed over the height of land to the Severn River basin. Swain and his men probably travelled through Deer Lake and Sandy Lake, and eventually made their way down to Severn. At Severn, which had been elevated to the status of Factory, Swain joined his brother and journeyed inland to Trout Lake. Thomas Swain remained at Trout Lake

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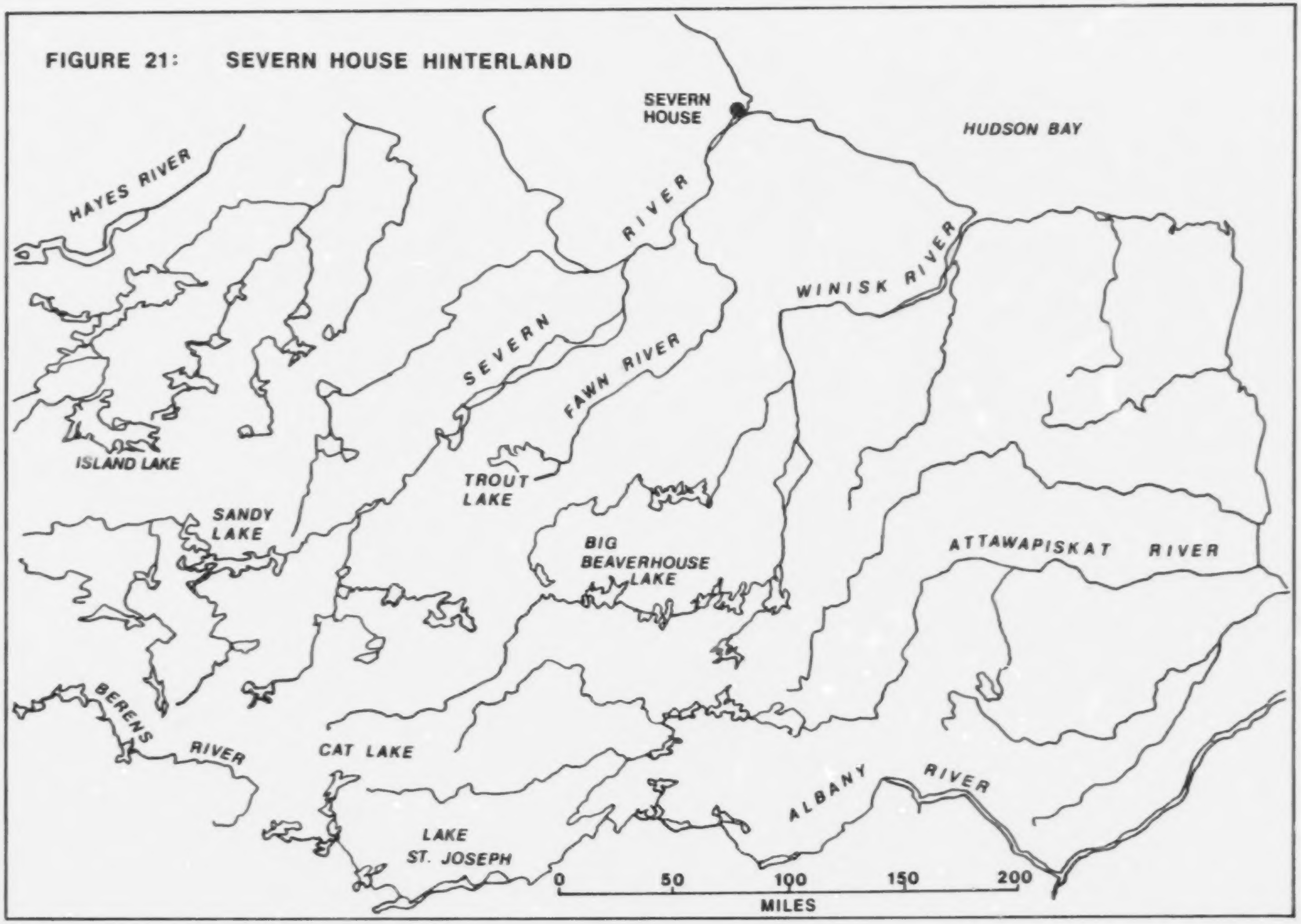
[55] The exact location of the post can be determined from Swain's journal. It was on the south shore near a sandy bay about five miles from the mouth of the Fawn River. Immediately offshore (about 150 yards) there was an island that extended about one and one quarter miles up the lake (HBCA, B.220/a/1, fos. 8d, 9).

FIGURE 21: SEVERN HOUSE HINTERLAND


SEVERN HOUSE
HUDSON BAY
HAYES RIVER
SEVERN RIVER
WINISK RIVER
FAWN RIVER
ISLAND LAKE
TROUT LAKE
SANDY LAKE
BIG BEAVERHOUSE LAKE
ATTAWAPISKAT RIVER
BERENS RIVER
CAT LAKE
ALBANY RIVER
LAKE ST. JOSEPH
0
50
100
150
200
MILES

while James pushed southward to *Mish a misk weesty* Lake (present Misamikwash Lake) at the headwaters of the Winisk River. The trading post was named Beaver House (the post at Trout Lake was subsequently known as Trout Lake House), a name that has persisted to the present Indian community known as Big Beaverhouse. James Swain realized that his post was not far from Osnaburgh House on the Albany River, but was uncertain of his exact geographic situation. Sensing that he might be infringing on Albany's territory, Swain wrote to Thomas at Severn requesting "information of such Inland posts as may be in or near our part of the interior, with the Indians names of the Lakes or places where they may be situated" (HBCA, B.198/a/55, fo. 45). Albany's chief factor, John Hodgson, was not pleased when he learned of Severn's Beaver House. He complained to Thomas: "this place is so nigh Osnaburgh that it hurts that place" (HBCA, B.3/b/45, fo. 41). Hodgson recommended that a more suitable place for a trading post was "Nagow Lake or what we call Sandy Lake, this spot I apprehend would be quite out of the way of both Albany and York" (ibid., fo. 41). Despite Hodgson's censure of Severn's inland activities, posts continued to be occupied north of Osnaburgh along the Winisk. Like the boundary line between Albany and York, the Severn/Albany boundary was difficult to draw because the territory was uncharted and poorly known to all but the Indians who lived there and a few experienced inland traders.

Alexander Kennedy, with his trading outfit from York Factory, ascended the Poplar River in the fall of 1807. He built his post on Drunken Lake (present Wrong Lake) which was called Brandy Lake by the Albany men. He was opposed there by Duncan Cameron who had been transferred to the Lac Ouinipique Department that year. Furs of any kind were scarce and, despite Cameron's experience, both posts made a poor trade. As Kennedy summarized it in June of 1808, "between us we had only seven wretched Indians" (HBCA, B.239/b/75, fo. 28).

Cameron replaced William McKay as proprietor of the Lac Ouinipique Department in the summer of 1807. McKay, thirty-five years old in 1807, retired from the service of the North West Company to spend his remaining years in relative comfort at Montreal (Wallace 1934:474). George Nelson, a clerk in the Lac Ouinipique Department, described Duncan Cameron in 1807: "for a long course of years a trader in the Nipigon, about, if not over 50 years of age. A small, but very active man" (Nelson, Reminiscences 5:190). Cameron's decision to spend his first winter at Drunken Lake seems to have been motivated by a desire to meet the HBC competition in its most vulnerable place. Cameron was assisted by John McPhail, a clerk who had operated at several posts in the department. Elsewhere around Lake Winnipeg, Cameron deployed his men at the usual locations. According to George Nelson, who was in charge of a post near the mouth of "River Dauphine" (present Dauphin River; the post was located about nine miles up the river), these men and posts included Alexander Campbell who wintered at a post near "Tête-au-Chien" (Dog Head, a point on the west side of the lake near the narrows). Peter Fidler met Campbell on 31 May 1808 and reported that Campbell and five Canadians had wintered in a deep bay on the southwest side of Lake Winnipeg (probably Fisher Bay) and had procured fourteen packs of furs (HBCA, E.3/3, fo. 60d). Alexander McKay, a younger brother of William, was stationed at Bas de la Rivière Ouinipique. Alexander McDonell was at the mouth of the Pigeon River (the post was located about two miles up the river according to Nelson and on the south side according to Fidler's sketch map [HBCA, E.3/3, fo. 61d]). John Crebassa was in charge of a post at Lac du Bonnet, and Paul La Croix was at a post farther up the Winnipeg River (possibly at the Dalles near present Kenora).

While Cameron and Kennedy competed against each other at Drunken Lake on the middle reaches of the Poplar River, the Albany men contented themselves with the trade of the upper Berens River. In the fall of 1807, William Thomas took ten men in two batteaux to Sandy Narrows House which had become the main depot for the Lake Sanderson District. Prior to leaving Osnaburgh House, Thomas encountered problems with the men appointed to his district. Thomas's comments recall those made earlier by David Sanderson:

> Lake Sanders is a bad place for living, and is a very difficult journey, and if every man is indulged to go to what place they chuse in a very short time all the men will want to go to Red River - there are many abuses carried on in Albany River particularly by the Officers, one in particular is in debauching one and other men (HBCA, B.193/a/1, fo. 2d).

At Sandy Narrows Thomas decided to send men down to the Great Fall, a move that was not sanctioned by Albany's chief, John Hodgson. The post at Great Fall was very close to Kennedy's York post at Drunken Lake. Kennedy soon became aware of the Albany men to his south, but he was too preoccupied with Cameron to raise any objection. In fact the York and Albany men got along well that winter. Kennedy even supplied trade goods to the Albany men at Great Fall House when they ran low during the winter.

After spending one winter in the Lac Ouinipique Department Cameron decided to reorganize the department in a major way. Convinced that its fur returns in the department could not meet the annual expenses, Cameron presented his plans to the wintering partners of the North West Company at Fort William on 24 July 1808. As a result the following resolutions were passed:

> It appeared that in the winter of 1807/8, there had been Ten Canoes, and as many Posts and Masters in Lac Ouinipique Department - That five of these Posts only produced 32 1/2 Packs in all - it was therefore determined that these five Posts should be given up, & the remaining five only established - Say Skabitchiwine [Escabitchewan], Bas de la Riviere, Riviere Cassé [Broken River], Riviere au Tourte [Pigeon River], & Les Dalles, and that Mr. Cameron should make his Arrangements accordingly (Wallace 1934:257).

The Lac Ouinipique Department was thus reduced by half for the 1808-09 season, and only two posts were maintained east of Lake Winnipeg.

In the fall of 1808 Cameron arrived at the bottom of the Winnipeg River with his reduced outfit of men and trade goods. The NWC post was renamed Fort Alexander by Alexander McKay in the winter of 1807-08. McKay found the previous name, Bas de la Rivière Ouinipique, too long, so he named it Fort Alexander because the department had so many clerks with the name Alexander (McKay, McDonell, and Campbell) (Nelson Letters: 5). While Cameron remained at Fort Alexander, John Crebassa was sent to Rivière Cassé (Broken or Rice River), Alexander McDonell to Pigeon River, Alexander Campbell to Great Fall, and George Nelson to Rivière Dauphine. This latter post was omitted in the NWC minutes, but it seems that Cameron opted to keep it open in 1808-09, perhaps at the expense of the Dalles post. Cameron did not send men to his previous post on Drunken Lake, and the York traders also failed to return. Like the Nor'Westers, the York men had decided to withdraw from this area for economic reasons. The fur returns of 1807-08 had been poor, but York's chief factor McNab also faced a shortage of manpower: "scarcity of men causes us now to relinquish a post occupied last year near Sandy Narrows" (HBCA, B.239/b/77, fo. 4). During the winter of 1808-09 the York men occupied only Oxford House and Merry's House to the northeast of Lake Winnipeg.

The withdrawal of the York traders from East Winnipeg and the reduced numbers of Nor'Westers in the area made it easier for the Albany men in the Lake Sanderson District. William Thomas wintered once again at Sandy Narrows, and James Slater was in charge of Great Fall House. Slater did not reoccupy the old post, but built a new one downriver at the "Little Ripple" (probably present Night Owl Rapids). Slater was guided in this decision by the Indians who refused to trade at Great Fall. On 27 September 1808 Alexander Campbell, who had been sent to Pigeon River, arrived with ten men in two large canoes (HBCA, B.193/a/2, fo. 10). According to George Nelson, Campbell had only six men: "Lorren [Joseph Lorin?], Jean-Baptiste Larocque, L'Epine, Brilliere, Baudrie [Michel], and Londeau [Louis Roundeau?]" (Nelson 1808-10:2). Campbell built his post about ten yards from Slater's post and established an outpost to the east (possibly at the Great Fall). Slater responded by building an outpost on "the other side of the point that had the outlook of the whole lake" (possibly present Meenaeeki Point of Family Lake). During the fall and early winter Campbell gave out large amounts of goods on credit to the Indians, and threatened to kill them if they did not bring their furs to his post (HBCA, B.193/a/2, fo. 10). Slater called the Nor'Westers "a set of mear [mere] blackguards sent here on purpose to do everything that is bad" (ibid.).

Campbell brought with him eighteen kegs of liquor which he quickly depleted by giving large amounts to the Indians, his men, and himself. Alcohol abuse was not new to Campbell. He had come close to being "court martialed" for excessive drinking in the summer of 1808 (Nelson, Reminiscences 5:205). In January 1809 Campbell ran out of liquor, so he went to McDonell's post at the mouth of Pigeon River for an extra supply. McDonell immediately sent a messenger to Fort Alexander, informing Duncan Cameron of the situation. Cameron gave orders to McDonell to seize control of Campbell's post and send him down to the depot. McDonell was assisted in this task by George Nelson and three men. They left Pigeon River about the middle of March 1809, and reached Campbell's post in seven days (17 March 1809 according to Slater). They found Campbell and his men in a deplorable state of starvation. According to Nelson, Campbell's post was built on "the borders of the Lake du Grande Rapide," evidently the second post mentioned by Slater above. Campbell was taken out by Nelson, while McDonell remained at Great Fall to try to recover some of the trade.[56] In this he appears to have been unsuccessful, for Slater later observed that "the Indians are hunting nothing and making complaint for want of beaver" (HBCA, B.193/a/2, fo. 17d).

In the summer of 1809 plans were made at Albany Fort at bolster the trade of Lake Sanderson District. The earlier agreement to withdraw from East Winnipeg in favour of the York traders had not materialized because of York's inactivity in the area. Another reason for renewed interest in the Lake Sanderson trade was David Sanderson's return as district trading master. His return may have been connected to the death of his John in the spring of 1809. John Sanderson had drowned near Sandy Narrows on a trading trip to an Indian camp. It was evident that alcohol had been involved, and William Thomas later commented, "I have every reason to believe this is a custom among our people and at this time has been the means of their Honours losing a good servant and a mother and 4 small children a good father and husband" (HBCA, B.193/a/2, fo. 20). The problem of alcohol abuse was shared by fur company personnel and Indians alike. At this juncture, however, liquor was an indispensable item in the fur trade (see fig. 22). Without it both companies would be at a distinct disadvantage in collecting furs, and in keeping most of their employees satisfied through the long winter trading season.

David Sanderson, the grizzled fifty-seven-year-old veteran of Albany's inland trade, set out from Osnaburgh House on 6 August 1809. His outfit consisted of twenty-two men in three batteaux. On 30 August they arrived at Sandy Narrows House, and from there Sanderson made his arrangements for the winter season. He sent James Slater and six men to Great Fall, and James Loutitt and six men to Grey Goose Lake. Sanderson remained at Sandy Narrows with the rest of the men.

The Albany men were alone in the Lake Sanderson District. The York traders once again declined to settle a post in the region, and the Nor'Westers, continuing in their policy of withdrawing from

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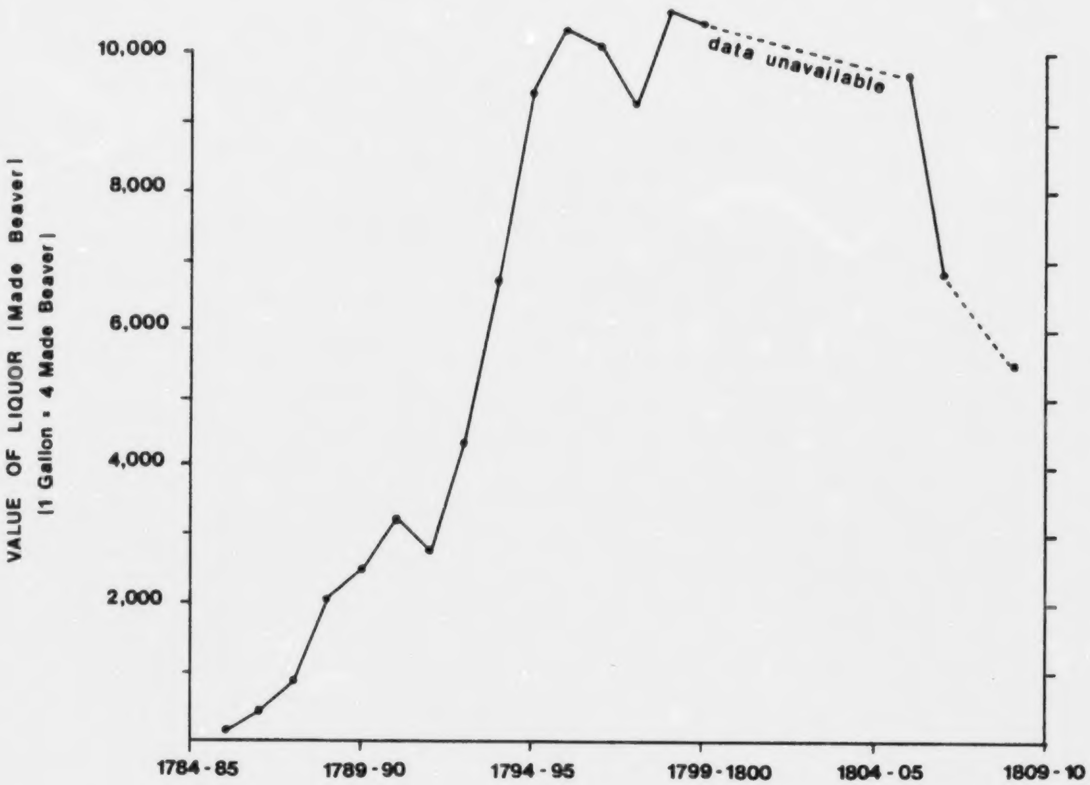
[56] Campbell was taken to Fort William in the summer of 1809, and then sent down to Montreal. According to George Nelson, he was dismissed by the North West Company, but he was subsequently hired by the firm of Parker, Gerrard, Ogilvy and Company. His alcohol abuse continued, however, and he was reported to have died soon thereafter (Nelson, Reminiscences 5:64).

FIGURE 22: USE OF LIQUOR IN ALBANY'S INLAND* TRADE, 1784-1809

(*INCLUDES OSNABURGH AND DISTRICTS WEST)



SOURCES: HBCA, B.3/d/94-125

uneconomical areas, did not send men into the Lake Sanderson District. According to George Nelson, this policy was based upon the company's desire to centralize the trade. Nelson felt that the company could afford to reduce its number of posts because of a lack of competition. With the XY Company out of the picture, Nelson and many of his fellow Nor'Westers looked upon the competition with the Hudson's Bay Company as "almost as equal to being alone" (Nelson, Reminiscences 5:227).

The Lac Ouinipique Department in 1809-10 consisted of Cameron at Fort Alexander, Nelson at Rivière Dauphine, and Crebassa at Rivière Cassé (McDonell had been transferred to the Red River Department). Nelson's post was closest to the Lake Sanderson District and, although it was across the lake, it attracted many of the Indians who had previously traded with McDonell and Campbell. These Indians differed in language and appearance from the "Sauteaux" (Ojibwa) who lived near Rivière Dauphine. "They were called Mashkiégons, from the word Mash-Kieg, signifying a Swamp" (Nelson, Reminiscences 5:228). They cannot be assumed to be the so-called "Swampy Cree" who lived near York Factory and along the Hudson Bay Lowlands. Nelson described their language as "nearer the Cris than the Sauteux," but ethnohistorians have argued that they were more closely related to the Northern Ojibwa (Bishop 1974; Rogers 1983). They may have been the same people that the Ojibwa historian William Warren described as the most northern branch of the Ojibwa who were called "Omushke-goes, or Swamp People, derived from the nature of the country they occupy" (Warren 1974:85). Warren commented that these people were looked down upon by the southern Ojibwa because they did not engage in warfare (ibid., 86). This view was also imparted to Nelson who wrote: "the Sauteux had a contempt for them because they were too frivolous, and had never faced an enemy" (Nelson, Reminiscences 5:228).

The prospects for the fur trade in the winter of 1809-10 were promising for the Albany traders in the Lake Sanderson District. With little competition in the area and a large outfit of men and trade goods, David Sanderson believed his returns would be profitable. There was also a sense of established authority in the affairs at Sandy Narrows House. In the fall the men had taken up a crop of potatoes that had been planted the previous spring, and the fall fishery was productive. During the winter, however, the Indians failed to bring in the expected furs. No doubt some traded at Nelson's NWC post near the mouth of the Dauphin River, but there was also a continued decrease in the numbers of fur bearers, especially beaver. At Great Fall House Slater wrote on 9 April 1810, "as for Beaver skins I have seen only cats [lynx] and a few martins [marten] and they [the Indians] all make a great complaint theres no Beaver" (HBCA, B.193/a/3, fo. 8). Sanderson also complained that the Indians did not come to Sandy Narrows House: "I have not seen an Indian all winter but a few starving creatures lying about" (ibid., fo. 5). Sanderson's despair over his fur returns was augmented by news from Albany that Lake Sanderson District was to be abandoned the next year. Everything of value was packed into the batteaux and transported to Osnaburgh House in June 1810. There was plenty of room since the batteaux carried only 1,847 made beaver in furs (HBCA, B.3/d/125, fo. 25).

To the south of Lake Sanderson District the Albany men were involved in a desperate struggle with the Nor'Westers in the Red Lake District. The Albany traders had withdrawn from that quarter following the violent confrontations with the Nor'Westers in the winter and spring of 1806. In the summer of 1809, however, chief factor John Hodgson at Albany Fort decided to re-establish a presence in the Red Lake District. He ordered William Corrigal, who had been terrorized at Red Lake by John Haldane in 1805-06, to take three batteaux and sixteen men and winter beside the Nor'Westers. This large outfit was considered necessary to defend the company's interests. Hodgson characterized the NWC men in this area as, "Mr. Haldane and a set of abandoned wretches who stick at nothing short of murder" (HBCA, B.3/b/45, fo. 26d). Corrigal decided to build his post on Eagle Lake, south of Red Lake near the head of Wabigoon River. It was a strategic location between the Nor'Westers in the Monontagué Department (a sub-department of Lake Nipigon) and Lac la Pluie Department. The Nor'Westers responded by sending two outfits from each of these departments to oppose Corrigal and his men. Aeneas Macdonell was sent with nine men from Lac Seul (Monontagué Department headquarters), and Jacques Adhémar came with six men from Fort Lac la Pluie.

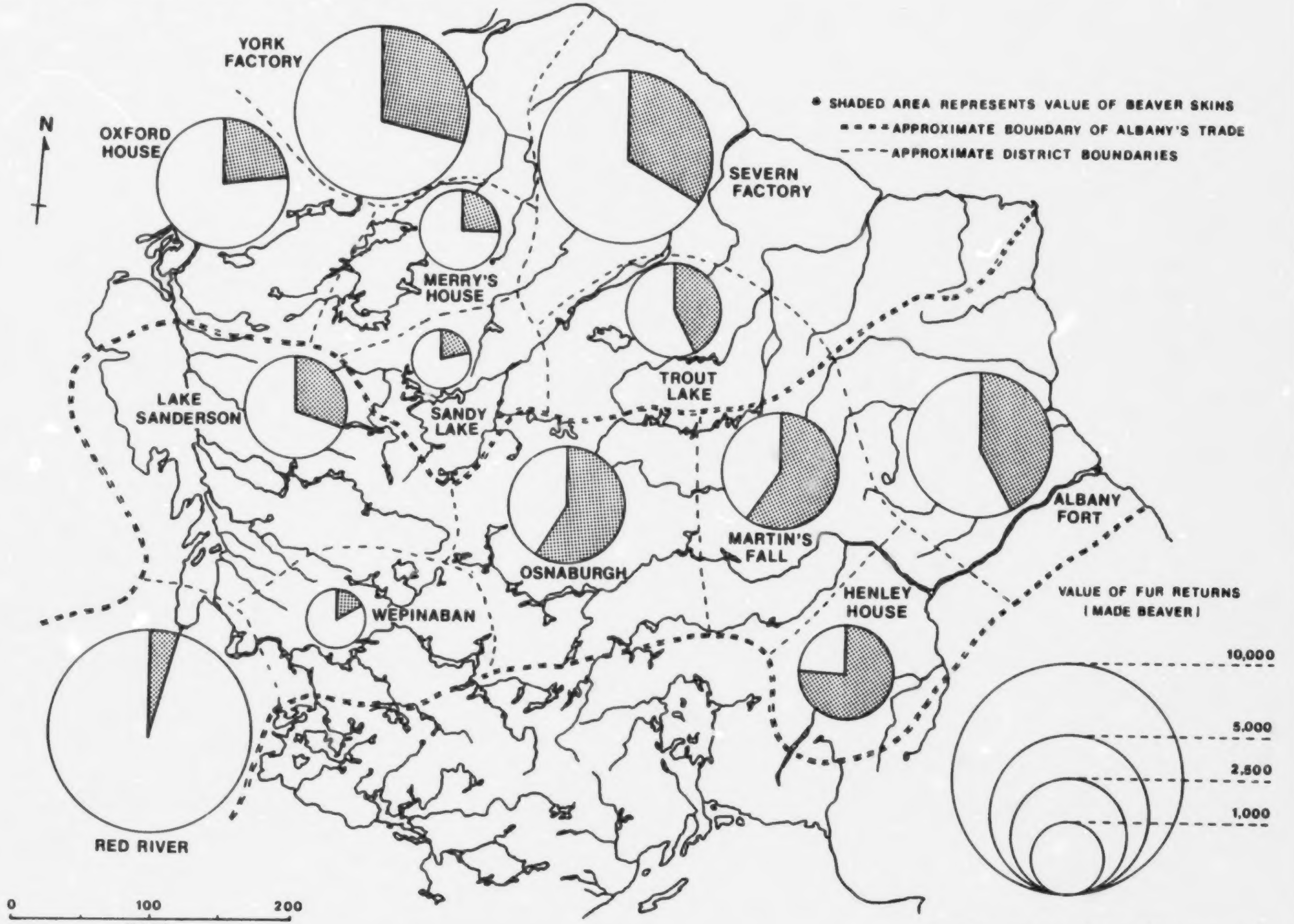
John Haldane, Corrigal's former nemesis at Red Lake, sent Macdonell to oppose the Albany men with as much force as necessary to drive them out of Eagle Lake. Corrigal reported that Macdonell had been sent to "spill Blood" (HBCA, B.57/a/2, fo. 1). Macdonell and Adhémar confronted Corrigal and his men on 16 September 1809. An argument turned into a scuffle in which men from both sides were wounded, and ended when Macdonell was shot dead by John Mowat near the HBC post. Corrigal claimed that the shooting was an act of self defence, but the Nor'Westers held that it was murder. Nine days later, an armed NWC force of twenty-three men headed by Haldane from Lac Seul and Archibald McLellan from Lac la Pluie arrived at the HBC post to take Mowat into custody. Mowat was turned over with James Tate who went along as a witness. In May 1810 Corrigal joined them and they were escorted to Montreal to stand trial on charges relating to the murder of Macdonell. Corrigal and Tate were found innocent, and Mowat, although charged with manslaughter, served only six months in prison (Williams 1975:102).

The incident at Eagle Lake in 1809 confirmed the superior strength of the Nor'Westers in this region. The rapidly declining fur resources added to the resolve of men such as Haldane and Macdonell to extinguish their competition by any means. The Albany men found it difficult, if not impossible (as Mowat's actions indicate), to tolerate the intimidations of their competitors. They were further strapped by inadequate resources to counter the aggressive tactics of the Nor'Westers. As John Hodgson wrote in the summer of 1809, "they [the NWC] are too numerous for us and of course we act generally on the defensive, and live in hopes the Honorable Committee will give us the means in time to counteract their efforts which increases on us every year" (HBCA, B.3/b/45, fo. 26d). Hodgson's comments foreshadowed the Eagle Lake incident, and pointed to the need for a major reorganization in the HBC fur trade.

By 1810 the fur trade in the East Winnipeg Country and throughout much of the Little North had declined sharply. Large areas had been overtrapped and reports indicated that the beaver had disappeared completely from areas which had once been rich in that animal. Figure 23 shows the returns of the Hudson's Bay Company in the Little North in 1810. The most notable aspect of this map compared with the previous maps of fur returns is the decline in beaver from the area around Lake Winnipeg.

Although the North West Company had already begun its withdrawal from East Winnipeg in 1808, the Hudson's Bay Company made plans in 1810 for new settlements in the region to be directed from York Factory. Just as the Nor'Westers had generally been the first to exploit fur bearing regions, they were also in this instance quicker than the Hudson's Bay Company to respond to the resource depletion occasioned by competitive trading. In part this reflected a more intense pressure to realize annual profits but it was also evidence of a more efficient and accurate communication of knowledge among the bourgeois of the North West Company at their annual meetings in Fort William.

FIGURE 23: HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY FUR RETURNS, 1809-10


N
YORK FACTORY
OXFORD HOUSE
SEVERN FACTORY
MERRY'S HOUSE
TROUT LAKE
SANDY LAKE
LAKE SANDERSON
OSNABURGH
MARTIN'S FALL
ALBANY FORT
HENLEY HOUSE
WEPINABAN
RED RIVER
* SHADED AREA REPRESENTS VALUE OF BEAVER SKINS
APPROXIMATE BOUNDARY OF ALBANY'S TRADE
APPROXIMATE DISTRICT BOUNDARIES
VALUE OF FUR RETURNS (MADE BEAVER)
10,000
5,000
2,500
1,000
0
100
200
MILES

SOURCES: HBCA, B.3/d/125; B.198/d/86; B.239/d/143

Chapter IX

REORGANIZATIONS AND RETRENCHMENTS, 1810-14

In the summer of 1810 the Hudson's Bay Company completed a fundamental reorganization of its trade in Rupert's Land. This "New System" or "Retrenchment," as it was sometimes called, was fostered by a newly reorganized London Committee headed by Andrew Wedderburn and John Halkett (Williams 1983:44). The basic feature of this restructuring was the division of Rupert's Land into two relatively autonomous administrative units or departments. The Northern Department comprised all lands to the west of and including the Lake Winnipeg drainage, while the Southern Department was made up of the lands lying to the east of the Lake Winnipeg basin. The East Winnipeg country thus became part of the Northern Department which had its headquarters at York Factory. In a single stroke, the London Committee severed the connections that had fostered Albany's development of the fur trade in the region. The reorganization of the inland trading districts clearly established York Factory as the central depot in the fur trade of the northwest. Albany's role was much diminished, and all of its inland districts were disbanded except for Osnaburgh, Henley, and Martin's Fall (those cut in 1810 were Lake Sanderson, Wepinaban, Pembina River, and Red River).

The trade inland from York was also reorganized that year and a new district within the Northern Department, the Winnipeg Factory District, was formed to administer the trade of the East Winnipeg country and adjacent areas. The Winnipeg Factory District comprised that part of the Lake Winnipeg drainage which was bounded by Oxford House on the north, Cumberland House on the west, and the headwaters of the Red River on the south. The London Committee, however, was uncertain where the eastern boundary of the district should be placed and left that decision to be made mutually by the officers in charge of York and Albany factories. Although the London Committee recommended that the eastern boundary should extend to the height of land separating Lake Winnipeg drainage from the Albany basin, it was aware that such an arrangement might warrant modification in the light of previous trangressions by Albany and York traders. This prompted the Governor and Committee to write to William Auld at York,

> You will have to arrange with Mr. Thomas the limits of the Posts of the Factories of Winnipeg and Albany as you may mutually consider most proper, but from the information at present before us, we are inclined to think that Lake Sal [Lac Seul] ought to remain attached to Albany, though the waters which flow from it fall into Lake Winnipeg which in general is to be considered as the criterion of belonging to the Factory of that name (HBCA, A.6/18, fo. 1).

Despite these concerns, a mutually accepted eastern boundary did not emerge in the years immediately following the reorganization, and the trading arrangements in the headwater region were instead pursued in an *ad hoc*, year-by-year fashion.

The new system also included measures designed to cut costs and improve profits from the fur trade. The main policy change in this direction was the implementation of a profit-sharing programme among the chief factors and inland traders. Half of the company's profits were to be divided among its officers, a move that brought the Hudson's Bay Company closer to the Nor'Westers' system of management. It was hoped that the profit-sharing system would encourage greater frugality and eliminate the internal competition between districts and factories that had plagued the company for years. The profit-sharing idea had first appeared in 1806, but it was not until 1810 that it became a working policy (Rich 1960, vol. 2:269). Profit-sharing replaced the old premium system, whereby inland traders and bayside factors received a bonus on the value of their fur returns. Premiums were paid regardless of the cost required to obtain the furs. This led to many abuses, and the new governing committee of the company believed that costs had become too high in many districts.

The removal of the premium system caused general dissatisfaction among the inland men. The reaction of the HBC men to the new system was summarized by Nor'Wester George Nelson in 1815. Nelson spent the winter of 1814-15 at Manitounamingan Lake (present Manitounimaig Lake) in the Pic Department. The HBC men at a nearby post told him that in former days their situation was much more comfortable.

> They were allowed for such hard places as these 2/3 and sometimes 3/4 if not intirely maintained from the Factory, i.e. European provisions - they were besides on their arrival (and during all the time they remain'd at the Factory) allowed a certain quantity of rum pr. day - tobacco and pipes - frequently raisins, figs, prunes, molasses; - at their departure for winter quarters each man a Gall. spirits, besides figs, sugar, etc. *Premiums* and bounties, which sometimes was equal to half their wages. In those days the HB's service was easy and agreeable, both for the *officers* and men, for their was no *scrutiny*, every clerk (officer) was well enough acquainted with the business that however defficient he was in *furs*, his *returns* always were good - feasting, drinking, largesses, and maintaining large families in cloathing at the Company's expence was to be seen in almost every clerks house (Nelson 1815:1).

The situation following 1810 changed dramatically. The inland officers reduced expenses to a minimum, and even the chief factors felt the pinch of the new system. According to Nelson's HBC informants, "the Governors [chief factors] who in former days treated themselves as kings now all themselves the same only as to the men, a salted goose and a pound of flour per day" (ibid.).

The Hudson's Bay Company's new system imposed wage ceilings on its labourers, and did away completely with premium pay to non-officers. The pay for common labourers was not to exceed twenty pounds per annum; that of mechanics and steersmen was limited to thirty pounds; writers were to receive no more than forty pounds; and master carpenters, blacksmiths, and boatbuilders could expect no more than forty-five pounds (HBCA, A.6/18, p. 43). The amount of European provisions sent to the various districts was cut drastically, and the men were forced to buy goods that had previously been given free from the company store. They were given only a one-fifth reduction on the prices offered to Indians on all goods except liquor, which sold at full price (ibid., p.44).

The cost-cutting measures of the Hudson's Bay Company's new system were met with general dislike throughout the ranks of its labour force. Common labourers were particularly displeased with the changes, and many refused to renew their contracts and returned to Britain or went free in the country. For example, David Sanderson jr. and Hugh Linklater left the service in 1811 to become freemen after "their extravagent Demands for wages being rejected" (HBCA, B.3/b/48a, fo.37d). This was a serious blow to the company at the time, for it was unable to secure extra men during this period when Britain was at war with France. As a result, the labour force at Albany decreased from 172 in 1808-09 to 152 in 1809-10, and eighty-eight in 1810-11 (see fig. 10). In two years the number of men in the Albany establishment declined almost by half.

The axe of austerity fell on men of all ranks in the HBC service. Nowhere was this fact more clearly apparent than at Albany Fort. John Hodgson, who had been chief factor at Albany since 1799, was unceremoniously sacked from his office. A blunt letter from the Governing Committee written on 31 May 1810 delivered the news of Hodgson's dismissal:

> The increased exertions which, upon the new system will be necessary for the government of Albany will render your services no longer necessary (HBCA, A.6/18, p. 9).

The governors in London blamed Hodgson for the decrease of Albany's fur returns, and the increase in expenses. In fact, the Albany establishment became somewhat of a scapegoat for the problems of the company. The superintendent of the Northern Department, William Auld, offered the following view of Albany's past management in a letter to Thomas Thomas, superintendent of the Southern Department, on 16 August 1811:

> I am told that owing to the long absence of all sense of duty or discipline the men of A.R. [Albany River] are become the common reproach of their native Country and their fellow servants... they are assuredly more fit to inhabit near another Bay, where there are not only black swans, but as great Blackguards as themselves (HBCA, B.3/b/48a, fo. 20).

Hodgson was replaced by Thomas Vincent as chief of Albany.[57] Vincent had worked as an accountant at Albany Fort before his appointment as an inland trader in 1797. His close attention to the account books and his dedication to the new company management made him an obvious choice for the leadership of Albany.

During the 1810-11 season, the Northern Department's new Winnipeg Factory District was administered in the northeast at Oxford House, from which four outposts were established: Island Lake, Cross Lake, Black River (present Mukutawa River), and Winnipegishish (present Molson Lake). The Nor'Westers from Nipigon settled at Island Lake, but the other posts were unopposed during the 1810-11 trading season. The state of the fur trade in this region, however, was far from encouraging. Beaver were drastically depleted and William Sinclair at Oxford wrote:

> they [Indians] make a heavy complaint that there is no Beaver to be found any where which I truly belive to be the case... few of these animals is in this quarter of the country when first this House Oxford was settled the Beaver was middling numerous & every year since they have been upon the decline and at present there is no sign of animals (HBCA, B.156/a/4, fo. 4d).

The only area that showed any signs of a profitable trade was that surrounding the Black River (Mukutawa River) post on the east coast of Lake Winnipeg. Sinclair remarked that the trade at Black River in 1810-11 was "mostly Beaver skins in general the furs from that Quarter is good" (ibid., fo. 5d).

Despite the reorganization, Albany traders from Osnaburgh House returned to the Berens River in 1810. David Sanderson was in charge of the outfit in what would be his last winter in the fur trade. He took ten men in two batteaux to Sandy Narrows House, and possibly outfitted a second post at Great Fall (no post journal has survived to confirm this). The fur returns continued to dwindle, and only twenty-two packs of furs were traded during the 1810-11 season (HBCA, B.155/a/22, fo. 13).

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[57] John Hodgson left Albany Fort in August 1810, and took his family to a farm on Lac des Chats on the Ottawa River. Colin Robertson visited him on 27 May 1815, and described Hodgson's situation as little different from that of the Indians. Robertson spent some time inside the cramped quarters of Hodgson's farmhouse while the former Albany chief factor rambled on about the Hudson's Bay Company. This speech was interrupted when a pig entered the house, and Robertson took the opportunity to leave. As he went out the door, Hodgson told him that he was many years Governor of Albany, but Robertson could not believe it and wrote: "the upper works of his excellency is a little deranged" (Rich 1939:220).

David Sanderson retired from the HBC service in the summer of 1811 and returned to his native Orkney Island home in Kirkwall.[58] His departure marked the end of an era for Albany's inland fur trade. The network of inland trading posts that stretched west to Lake Winnipeg, and even as far as the Assiniboine River valley in the 1790s, had diminished to a handful of posts by 1811. The retrenchment system of the Hudson's Bay Company spelled the end for Albany's ambitious inland program, but it had long been doomed by falling fur returns. For Sanderson personally, the end must have been bitter. He had served for forty-one years and had risen to a position of authority among Albany's officers. By 1805 he was earning seventy pounds per year plus the premium on his fur returns - a salary second only to the chief factor (HBCA, B.3/d/118, fo. 52). In 1810 his base salary was cut to fifty pounds per year, a move that reflected the company's resolve to turn a profit in the fur trade (HBCA, B.3/d/125, fo. 54).

The summer of 1811 also marked the transfer of Duncan Cameron from the Lac Ouinipique Department to the Lac la Pluie Department (Wallace 1934:269). Thus, in a single season, two main characters in the fur trade of the Little North were gone. Cameron's departure from Lac Ouinipique was inevitable, especially after the departmental reorganization in 1808 that dropped Lac Ouinipique to a minor fur trade region. A man of Cameron's talents could be better used in another area. Lac la Pluie was not a highly productive fur trade department in 1811, but it was a strategic centre for the North West Company's transportation and provisioning network. In 1814 Cameron was transferred again to the Red River Department, a move that brought him into prominence in the struggle between the North West Company and the HBC-sponsored Selkirk Settlement at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers.

John Dugald Cameron took over the charge of the North West Company's Lac Ouinipique Department in 1811. Although not yet a partner in the company (he was made a partner in 1813), Cameron had gained considerable experience in the trade of the Nipigon and Lac Ouinipique Departments (Wallace 1934:430). He assumed control of the department at a time when the fur trade was at a low point. George Nelson, who wintered at Jack Head in 1810-11, wrote that "the shabbiest returns ever made in this department will be this year" (Nelson 1810-11:47). On 18 February 1811 Nelson despaired over his poor trade: "I am afraid that I'll not make 10 packs here this year, and yet make as much indeed more expences than were required to make 20 or 30 only but a few years past. The country grows poorer every day" (ibid., p. 41). Nelson overestimated the size of his fur returns. In the spring of 1811 he left Jack Head with only six packs of furs (ibid., p. 52).

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[58] Sanderson left behind a large family that included at least four sons and a daughter: David Jr., Thomas, James, William, and Frances (HBCA, B.3/a/112, fo. 27).

The poor fur returns weighed heavily on all who were involved in the fur trade. Those who felt the effects most acutely were the Indians who had become dependent, in many ways, on their annual supply of trade goods. In previous years the fur traders gave out large amounts of goods on credit in the fall, and the Indians were usually able to pay them back with furs in the winter and spring. By 1811 the credit system, or debt system as the fur traders called it, was beginning to deteriorate. In East Winnipeg many Indians were accumulating large debts. George Nelson observed in 1811 that Indians came to his Jack Head post to ask for trade goods on credit when they had more than fifty made beaver owing from the previous year (Nelson, Letters: 6). Although Nelson and his HBC counterparts tried to cut their expenses, they were unable to avoid the growing problem of Indian debts. While there was still competition in the area the Indians were able to play one post against another to satisfy their needs. As more posts were abandoned, however, they were gradually forced to depend on a single post for their trade goods.

Another group of people who were affected by the decline in the fur trade were the men who worked for the fur companies and their families who depended upon them for their livelihood. As fur returns fell men lost their jobs. The North West Company reduced its labour force in the northwest from 950 in 1805-06 to 721 in 1811-12 (PAC, MG 19 C1, vols. 44-55; HBCA, F.4/32). The Hudson's Bay Company personnel in the northwest declined from 593 in 1798-99 to 390 in 1811-12 (HBCA, B.239/d/120, 156; B.42/d/77, 97; B.3/d/110, 133; B.198/d/65, 88). Those who remained in the fur trade worked for generally lower base wages, and in many areas they could expect little remuneration in the form of premium pay for fur returns. Many of the men employed by the North West Company began to accumulate debts owed to the company in the same way as the Indians who bought goods at the post. The common labourers were forced to buy most of their so-called luxury goods (items such as extra blankets and clothing) from the company shop. With increasingly large families to support, many of the men were forced into debt and some abandoned their employers. George Nelson commented on this when he wrote in 1811 that there were so many men in debt, "some of them even laugh at their own retchedness, by saying 'Je suis hors de *marque* avec les bourgeois' [The bourgeois do not know that I exist]" (Nelson, Letters: 8).

In the summer of 1811, the Hudson's Bay Company amended its plans of the previous year by splitting the Winnipeg Factory District into two parts consisting of the East and West Winnipeg Factories. The eastern district was to be bounded by the height of land separating Lake Winnipeg drainage from that of Severn and Albany. William Hillier, a former military officer with no experience in the fur trade, was appointed chief of East Winnipeg and was to be in command of a group of Irish labourers, who for the first time were being recruited for the company's service. The company's London correspondence indicates that Hillier was chosen for this task because of his skills as a disciplinarian rather than his expertise in the fur trade.

> We [the London Committee] have intentionally put under his [Hillier's] command a set of completely new men in order that the habits of subordination which he undertakes to establish among them may not be deranged by any communication with men accustomed to a more relaxed state of discipline (HBCA, A.6/18, fo. 27).

It was hoped that the deployment of Irish labourers under strict discipline would be more effective than using Orkneymen to counter the bullying tactics of the Nor'Westers that had become common in much of the Northwest.

Hillier was instructed to establish the major post of the Winnipeg Factory near the mouth of Winnipeg River, near Fort Alexander and to "push his post up the river toward Lake Sal [Lac Seul] and Lake le Pluie [Rainy Lake], as far as circumstances enable" (HBCA, A.6/18, fo. 28). These three places were the main forwarding or inland depots for the fur brigades of the North West Company. It was apparent to the London Committee that if Hillier proved able to establish himself beside these three depots, then the Hudson's Bay Company would be strategically situated to sever the Nor'Westers' vital supply lines should any aggression develop. The strategic importance of this plan was such that East Winnipeg was given the highest priority by the London Committee: "the chief effort to be made this season must be in the Winepeg & Nipegon Country" (ibid., fo. 27). Both departments were ordered to send experienced and trustworthy servants to the East Winnipeg Factory, and to "transfer to the East Winnipeg Factory all the Canadians now in the Company's service, or at least as many of them as are within easy reach" (ibid., fo. 28).

These grand plans for a strategic offensive in East Winnipeg, however, were postponed as Hillier and his Irishmen arrived too late at York Factory to attempt any inland movement for the 1811-12 season. Instead, they wintered on Hudson Bay at the Nelson Encampment, on the north side of the Nelson River opposite Seal Island. The subdivision of the Winnipeg Factory District into eastern and western units was therefore cancelled. William Sinclair at Oxford House retained the management of both the eastern and western sections of Lake Winnipeg. Sinclair increased the trade in East Winnipeg by settling posts at the mouths of Jack, Black, and Poplar rivers. The Poplar River post was managed by Donald Sutherland and was the southernmost penetration of East Winnipeg by the York traders since Alexander Kennedy's winter at Drunken Lake (present Wrong Lake) on the Poplar River in 1807-08.

During the winter of 1811-12, one of Hillier's appointed assistant traders, John Stitt, a former Nor'Wester, wrote to Thomas Thomas at Albany refusing to accept the position and

> alledging as the Reasons for his Refusal, the smallness of his fixed salary, and the entire certainty he has (from his knowledge of the country), of the impossibility of any profits being made, as those posts have, for some years past produced very few good furs (HBCA, B.3/b/48a, fo. 26).

William Auld, the Northern Governor, sympathized with this assessment: "this is an additional confirmation of what I have long heard, that the East Winnipeg Country has been exhausted by Canadian traders" (ibid., fo. 42).

At Albany, news of Hillier's situation came late. Thomas had sent word to his traders at inland settlements to try to employ David Sandison (Sanderson) junior and Hugh Linklater whom he had recommended for the East Winnipeg Factory. They were, he wrote, "natives of the country and have been many years in the service, are expert in steering Boats or Canoes, able Interpreters and (the latter in particular) can act as Guides in most parts of the Winnipeg Country" (HBCA, B.3/b/48a, fo. 37d). Both Sanderson and Linklater had left the service the previous year and had become freemen. They were reported to be living among the Indians west of Osnaburgh House. They had not been found when the news of the postponement reached Albany in the winter. The Albany traders continued to tap the furs of East Winnipeg from their Sandy Narrows post, but the outfit that year was reduced to only five men. James Slater, who led the Sandy Narrows party, returned to Osnaburgh in the spring of 1812 with seventeen packs of furs. Although his return was small in comparison to earlier years, it was remarked to be quite good (HBCA, B.155/a/24, fo. 17d).

In the spring of 1812, Hillier left York Factory for East Winnipeg but decided against building a post beside Fort Alexander at the mouth of the Winnipeg River. Instead he settled beside the newly arrived settlers of Lord Selkirk's colony at Red River, explaining that, "for want of Traders it was impossible to push any outposts, and the Country in the vicinity of Point a Foutre being entirely destitute of furs" (HBCA, B.239/b/83, fo. 1). The one-year delay in plans had caused the company's earlier order to supply East Winnipeg with experienced servants and Canadians to go largely unheeded. At Osnaburgh House, Sanderson and Linklater were finally found and were engaged to assist in the establishment of the proposed Factory. These two men, however, were the only ones sent from the Southern Department, and it appears likely that they did not reach Fort Alexander before Hillier's decision to abolish his plans for a settlement there. In the ensuing confusion, the three posts which had been established the previous year on the eastern coast of Lake Winnipeg were abandoned. Hillier had taken the entire outfit of men and goods with him to Red River and had even sent the department's most experienced trader in East Winnipeg, Donald Sutherland, south to winter at Turtle River, an upstream tributary of the Red River.

The Nor'Westers in the Lac Ouinipique Department reacted to this situation by sending an outfit of men to winter at the mouth of the Pigeon River. When news of this post reached William Sinclair at Oxford House he reproached Hillier for his failure to establish a post on the east coast of Lake Winnipeg: "I understand that Mr. [Donald] Sutherland was to winter at some place along the East side of the Winipeg. Clouston Dickson informs me that the Canadians is settled the Pigeon River, in this case I am much afraid that they will cut off the Black River [present Mukatawa River] Indians" (HBCA, B.145/a/5, fo. 20). The Nor'Westers' Pigeon River outpost also competed with Albany's post at Sandy Narrows. James Slater was in charge of Sandy Narrows House in the winter of 1812-13. He had only four men with him, and they managed to trade sixteen packs of furs. This appeared to be a large trade, but as William Thomas commented in the Osnaburgh House journal, "the returns from this post [Sandy Narrows] are not so good as last year, being greatly defficient in Whole Beaver skins and Otters" (HBCA, B.155/a/25, fo. 10).

Hillier's decision not to settle the East Winnipeg Country had totally disrupted the company's plans for trade in the region and he was quickly replaced by the experienced trader James Sutherland.[59] Like Hillier, however, Sutherland too was opposed to building a large post or depot in the East Winnipeg Country. Rather, he elected to conduct the entire trade of the district from Cumberland House which was far removed from East Winnipeg.

The London Committee was frustrated by these events but still requested more information about the geography of the East Winnipeg Country since contemporary maps were all too vague on the region. Peter Fidler had made a detailed and accurate survey of Lake Winnipeg's eastern coast in 1809 (fig. 24). but the land farther east was still unknown, as is clearly evident in the Arrowsmith maps of the time. The committee sensed that the men at York Factory knew little of the region. It also appears to have judged this area to be more favourable to fur production than did its officers in the country. In April of 1814, it advised Thomas Thomas at York Factory that:

> It is highly necessary that this country should be effectually occupied from Osnaburg, Severn, or the posts on Lake Winipic. The most advantageous mode of placing them cannot be judged without these surveys, and no time should be lost in carrying them into effect (HBCA, A.6/18, p. 185).

Thomas Vincent at Albany was similarly advised to gather geographical information about East Winnipeg: "A sketch such as every Indian is capable of drawing, however rude and innacurate, would always be better than no information at all" (ibid., p. 271).

The fur trade during the 1813-14 season in East Winnipeg was extremely quiet. Five Albany traders from Osnaburgh House returned to Sandy Narrows House on the upper Berens River, and a small outpost was established at the mouth of the Berens River by men from Oxford House (HBCA, B.16/e/2, fo. 5d). The North West Company abandoned its post at the mouth of the Pigeon River, although its Jack Head post may have been maintained during the winter of 1813-14. The North West Company's Lac Ouinipique Department did not have sufficient manpower to operate more than two or three posts. There were only twenty-one men in the department that year (Wallace 1934:286). In the summer of

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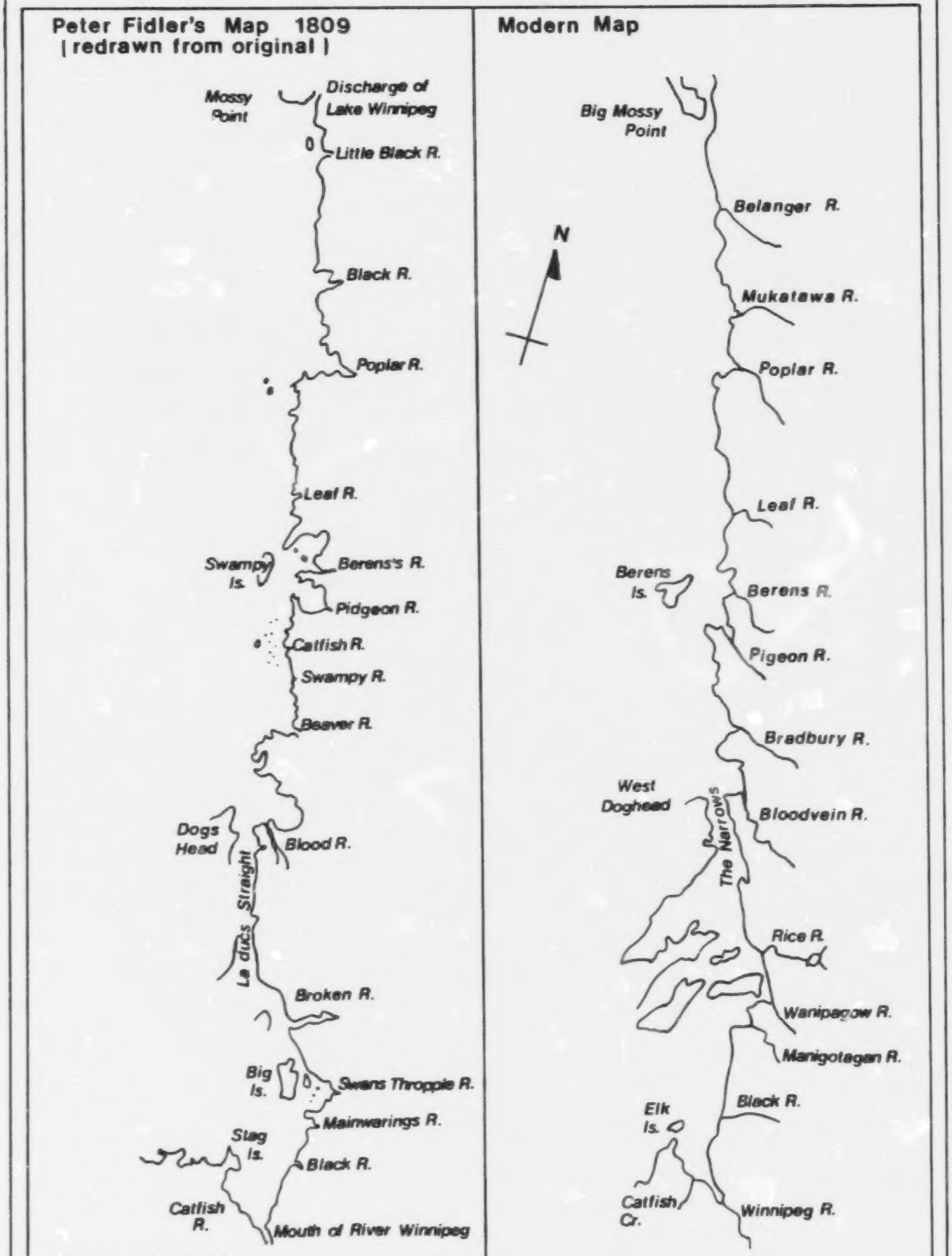
[59] Not to be confused with James Sutherland of Albany who had died at Brandon House in 1797.

FIGURE 24: LAKE WINNIPEG'S EASTERN COAST


Peter Fidler's Map 1809
[redrawn from original]
Mossy Point
Discharge of Lake Winnipeg
Little Black R.
Black R.
Poplar R.
Leaf R.
Swampy Is.
Berens's R.
Pidgeon R.
Catfish R.
Swampy R.
Beaver R.
Dogs Head
Blood R.
La ducs Straight
Broken R.
Big Is.
Swans Throppie R.
Mainwarings R.
Stag Is.
Black R.
Catfish R.
Mouth of River Winnipeg
Modern Map
Big Mossy Point
N
Belanger R.
Mukatawa R.
Poplar R.
Leaf R.
Berens Is.
Berens R.
Pigeon R.
Bradbury R.
West Doghead
The Narrows
Bloodvein R.
Rice R.
Wanipagow R.
Manigotagan R.
Elk Is.
Black R.
Catfish Cr.
Winnipeg R.

SOURCE: HBCA, E.3/3

1813 the proprietors of the North West Company had reduced the number of men in the department by thirteen (ibid., p. 273). It may have appeared to Indians living in the East Winnipeg watershed that the fur trade had come to an end that year.

Chapter X

THE FINAL YEARS OF COMPETITION, 1814-21

In the summer of 1814 the newly appointed governor of the Northern Department, Thomas Thomas, ordered the construction of a storehouse near the northern outflow of Lake Winnipeg. This new establishment was built on Mossy Point and called Norway House in recognition of the Norwegian labourers who were recruited to build it. Norway House was to serve as a forwarding depot for the Northern Department's fur brigades in much the same manner as Fort Alexander functioned for the Nor'Westers at the mouth of the Winnipeg River. Thomas also ordered James Sutherland to settle a post on the east coast of Lake Winnipeg at the mouth of the Pigeon River. The man placed in charge of this post was Dr. George Holdsworth who had formerly acted as surgeon at York Factory (1812-13) and at the Red River Settlement (1813-14). Upon hearing that Holdsworth had offered his services for the East Winnipeg post, Thomas expressed pleasure:

> I am glad that he has been employed in the Fur Trade, he bears a very good character, as a young man of superior abilities the zeal and assuidity which I know he possesses may render him (with a little experience) a very able trader (HBCA, B.239/b/85, fo. 35).

Although Holdsworth's post was listed in the accounts as Pigeon River House, the location of the post was actually on the Berens River. Donald Sutherland, who traded in the region a few years later, noted that the "old house built by Doctor Goldsworth [sic]" was near the mouth of the Berens River, "at the first fall from Lake Winnipeg" (HBCA, B.16/a/2, p.30). The terms Berens and Pigeon Rivers appear to have been used interchangeably among the Indians as well as the traders of East Winnipeg. Brother Frederick Leach, who ministered to the Indians of East Winnipeg in the early years of the twentieth century commented on this usage: "There is one fact I have never been able to find out. Why do the Indians here in their Saulteaux language call Berens River, Pigeon River?" (Leach 1976:6). The confusion appears to have arisen from the fact that the two rivers issue from the same lake (present Family Lake).

Holdsworth's trade at Berens River, although he faced no direct competition, was not encouraging. The fur returns were meagre and the York men found it very difficult to procure sufficient country provisions. On 28 February 1815, James Sutherland wrote:

> his prospects are not flattering their fishing has failed, and their whole stock was barely sufficient to keep them

> till spring with half allowance also very little hopes of his procuring many furs, as previous to his arrival at Pidgeon River [Berens River], most part of the Indians had given in hopes of our people arriving and had gone to the Canadians at Winnipeg River (HBCA, B.239/b/85, fo. 27d).

Holdsworth[60] commented that "Formerly this part of the country abounded in Beaver, but the great demand for their skins joined to a disease which carried off great numbers, has nearly extripated the race" (HBCA, B.16/e/1, fo. 4).[61]

The North West Company's Lac Ouinipique Department in 1814-15 had sufficient men and goods for only two posts. John Dugald Cameron (now a wintering partner) was in charge of seventeen men including two clerks, one interpreter and fourteen engagées (Wallace 1934: 286). In addition to Fort Alexander, an outpost was maintained at Jack Head (HBCA, B.16/e/1, fo. 8). Fort Alexander was described by Holdsworth in 1815:

> The houses they at present occupy were built on the site of a Post formerly belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company [Pointe au Foutre House] and have been erected six or seven years.[62] The buildings are extensive consisting of an elegant house for the officers, of several extensive warehouses, of a large Barn and a corn hill. Cultivation is carried on to the extent of four or five acres (HBCA, B.16/e/1, fo. 7d).

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[60] Although unsigned, the document entitled "Reports on the Eastern Coast of Lake Winipic, 1815" (HBCA, B./e/1) can be attributed to George Holdsworth. James Sutherland, who wintered in 1814-15 at the mouth of the Gunisao River and prepared a Jack River district report, wrote that Holdsworth had prepared the Berens River report (HBCA, B.154/e/1, fo. 1).

[61] Many reasons for the rapid depletion of beaver in this and other areas of the Canadian northwest were postulated in contemporary accounts. Holdsworth's explanation is very similar to that by John Tanner, who described an epidemic which killed many beaver in the fall of 1803. Tanner added: "Since that year the beaver have never been so plentiful in the country of Red River and Hudson's Bay, as they used formerly to be" (James 1830:105). John Dugald Cameron identified a different reason for the depletion of beaver. In 1826 he wrote: "I am convinced nothing tended more to the sudden decrease of Beaver which took place in the beginning of the present century as the great fires during the two dry summers of 1803/04 when the whole country was in continual blaze and stopt only by the snows of autumn" (HBCA, B.105/e/6, fo. 3). To these explanations must be added the extreme hunting pressure brought to bear upon the beaver populations at the height of the fur trade in the 1790s and early 1800s (see Lytwyn 1984). A different interpretation, expressed by Calvin Martin, points to the impact of epidemic

Holdsworth was aware that the Albany traders had formerly traversed much of the East Winnipeg Country, but none of their knowledge had been imparted to the men at York. He was informed that some Albany traders had in the past reached Lake Winnipeg by way of the Winnipeg River at its southern extremity. He also learned that they had occupied trading posts toward the height of land separating Lake Winnipeg from Albany drainage, but was unable to determine if "they had navigated these rivers [rivers flowing into Lake Winnipeg], or that they have explored the intermediate country" (HBCA, B.16/e/1, fo. 1).

The eastern coastline of Lake Winnipeg had been accurately surveyed by Peter Fidler in 1808 (fig. 24), but inland toward the height of land, the region was still uncharted. Holdsworth supplied what little information he could gather in 1814-15 concerning the nature of the country and the courses of the principal rivers draining the intervening territory. At the northern end of the lake, Jack River (present Gunisao River) emptied its water into Playgreen Lake just above the outlet of Lake Winnipeg. Holdsworth estimated the Gunisao descended from an area five days' journey to the east, or a distance of sixty to seventy miles. At its source lay Jack Lake (present Gunisao Lake), a "deep rocky Lake about 22 miles long and 7 wide it runs North & South along the Hight of land" (HBCA, B.16/e/1, fo. 1d). Farther south, the Poplar River was said to rise about seventy miles east of Lake Winnipeg at Thunder Lake (present Weaver Lake). That lake was in turn fed by the Drunken River which rose from Drunken Lake (present Wrong Lake) some fifty miles farther east. To the south of the Poplar lay the Berens River. Holdsworth dismissed the notion that the Berens had a direct communication with the Severn River, an error which dated from William Tomison's journey from Severn House to Lake Winnipeg in 1767. Holdsworth remarked that the Pigeon River, which entered Lake Winnipeg twenty miles south of the Berens, was the principal river, and the Berens "may with more propriety be called a branch of the Pigeon River" (ibid., fo. 1d). Both of these rivers issued from the Big Fall Lake (present Family Lake), which he estimated to be seventy miles east of Lake Winnipeg. Even though Holdsworth insisted on characterizing the Pigeon as the main river, the Indians informed him that the Berens was more easily navigated to the Big Fall.

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diseases on the relationship between Indians and animals (Martin 1978). Martin argued that Indians who had been decimated by European diseases blamed animal spirits and deliberately set about to destroy animal populations. This view cannot be supported by the evidence in the Little North, and several scholars have recently criticized Martin's thesis (Krech 1981).

[62] George Nelson described the construction of a new North West Company post at the bottom of the Winnipeg River in the summer of 1806. The site, according to Nelson, was "an old grave yard" (Nelson, Sorel Journal: 73).

East of the Big Fall Lake, Holdsworth was unsure of the course or length of the "Pigeon River." He did learn, however, that the Albany traders operated a post called Sandy Narrows near the headwaters of the "Pigeon," and was informed that, "The navigation of this river beyond the Big Fall Lake, is tolerably good only four falls occuring. Loaded Canoes will go in five days from the Big Fall to Sandy Narrows" (ibid., fo. 1d).

South of the Pigeon, the Blood River (present Bloodvein River) was described as a westward-flowing river which fell into Lake Winnipeg near the Dogs Head (present Doghead Point). This information was already on Arrowsmith's map, but Holdsworth provided additional details concerning its uncharted upper reaches. He remarked that the Bloodvein was not navigable for boats but that canoes could be conducted upriver. In describing the course of the river, Holdsworth provided a guidebook tour:

> In proceeding up the river after a voyage of four days we are now at a small lake called the Bad Lake, where the traders from Albany some years since had a Post. Beyond the Bad Lake, another small lake is met with, canoes may be conducted from these waters over the height of land to the rivers falling into the Red Lake (ibid., fo. 1d).

Holdsworth distinguished two parts of the East Winnipeg District: the Jack River Country and the East Winnipeg Country. The lands of the Jack River Country to the north were greatly impoverished "in animals both for food and raiments for the Natives." In addition, "the productions of this district for trade have failed greatly of late years Beaver is nearly annihilated, Musquash [muskrat] is not plentiful" (ibid., fo. 3d). An advantage of this area was its proximity to York Factory, but that was of little significance in light of its poor resources.

To the south of Jack River, the East Winnipeg Country, although imperfectly known, was recommended as a more fruitful place to conduct a trade for furs. Despite the reduced numbers of beaver and other fur bearers, the East Winnipeg Country was still worth exploiting. In Holdsworth's view: "The productions of this district which are most valuable for Trade are its furs these altho' not very numerous are of much finer quality than those farther westward" (ibid., fo. 4).

Details of the 1815-16 season are not available in the form of post journals or district reports, but from the York Factory account book it is evident that only one small outpost was settled in the entire East Winnipeg Country. Holdsworth left the service of the company and returned to England, and he was replaced by Donald Sutherland. Sutherland had previously operated posts along Lake Winnipeg at the mouths of the Gunisao, Mukatawa, and Poplar Rivers. The outfit was listed as Pidgeon River, but it was likely located near the post occupied by Holdsworth in 1814-15.

The Albany men pulled completely out of the East Winnipeg Country in 1815 after fifteen years of continuous trading on the Berens River. James Slater, who had managed the post at Sandy Narrows, wintered in 1815-16 at Red Lake with four men, including David and Thomas Sanderson. The Sandersons were in great demand because of their wilderness skills. John Davis, master at Osnaburgh House, wrote to Slater reminding him: "do not forget to send David or Thomas Saunderson before the ice brakes as I depend on one of them to build canoes" (HBCA, B.155/a/28, fo. 20).

There was little change in the fur trade of East Winnipeg for the 1816-17 season. Donald Sutherland once again wintered on the Berens River and, although no details of his trade have survived, it is evident from later journals that he built his post at the Great, or Big Fall. Slater and his Albany men wintered again at Red Lake on the margins of the East Winnipeg Country. They lacked, however, the services of David Sanderson junior who had deserted to live among the Indians. John Davis explained his reasoning: "David Sanderson... says that he will not come in the service I asked him for what reason he says because he is not used well, and is allways starving and will only do the same when he goes like an Indian" (HBCA, B.155/a/29, fo. 5).

With David Sanderson junior gone,[63] the Albany officers depended upon his brothers for services such as guiding and building canoes. Slater kept Thomas Sanderson at Red Lake during the winter to fix their canoe, but this caused anxiety to Davis at Osnaburgh: "if he is not here in time to build canoes for the ensuing summer, business will be at a stand" (HBCA, B.177/a/9, fo. 9d). At Red Lake Slater was opposed by Mr. (William) Harris, a Nor'Wester, who arrived with two canoes and seven men. Beside the competition from the Nor'Westers, Slater's trade was also affected by York's Big Fall House. As Slater wrote on 1 March 1817, "I am also informed by the King Fishers Indians that Mr. George [Donald] Sutherland is at Big Fall with two canoes from York" (ibid., fo. 17).

Donald Sutherland returned to Big Fall House in the fall of 1816. The post was built close to the waterfall at the upper end of the Lower Lake (present Family Lake) beside the remains of an old Albany trading post. During the summer of 1817, Sutherland and several men stayed at the house to finish its construction and to plant a garden. Potatoes, cabbages, turnips, and barley were sown in the hopes of supplementing the stock of fish, wild rice, waterfowl, and venison that could be procured from the surrounding area. The house was completed during the summer of 1818 and a fence was erected to enclose the gardens which spread over one and one quarter acres (HBCA, B.16/e/1, p. 30).

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[63] David Sanderson's name appears among the Indians who visited York's Big Fall House in the winter of 1817-18 (HBCA, B.16/a/1).

Big Fall House was supplied from Norway House by canoe. The journey was a difficult one, comprising many portages along the lower reaches of the Berens. Sutherland determined to find an easier route to Lake Winnipeg and left Big Fall in the late summer of 1817 with an Indian guide to explore a route via the Poplar River. This route had been previously used by the Albany men but Sutherland appears to have been unaware of this fact. The Poplar route proved to be even more difficult and dangerous than the Berens. On several occasions, the canoe was battered against rocks in the numerous rapids along the way and Sutherland exclaimed, "we ware very near drowned" (HBCA, B.16/a/1, p. 6). Altogether, the trip took seven days and required forty-one portages. On their return from Norway House with the goods for the coming season, Sutherland opted to use the Berens River route to the Big Fall. The outfit was packed into two canoes, and seven men including Sutherland and an Indian guide made the trip. The journey through Lake Winnipeg was hazardous as storms and high winds buffeted their small craft. It took thirteen days to reach Berens River, and seven more to ascend the river to the house.

Sutherland and his men faced no opposition that year and had a rather successful trade amounting to twenty-seven packs of furs representing a total value of £1,852. The reorganization in 1810 had done away with the old system of made beaver accounting in the company's books, and since that time the fur returns had been valued in pounds sterling. However, the made beaver standard was retained for the actual trade with the Indians, and by multiplying the made beaver standard for each fur type by the total quantity procured, the total value of the returns in made beaver can be reasonably calculated. Table 7 gives values for the 1819-20 and 1820-21 Berens River fur returns for which a detailed breakdown exists. Since no accounts of the fur trade prior to 1819 have survived for Berens River, a total made beaver figure for earlier years can only be determined by calculating an average ratio between pounds sterling and made beaver. Using this method, the total returns of the 1817-18 season have been calculated to be roughly 3,000 made beaver (table 8).

Since it had no competition, the Big Fall House could draw Indians to trade from a large area. The trade, although lacking in beaver, was substantial enough in other furs such as marten, lynx, and muskrat (see table 9) to warrant plans to open several outposts the next season. Toward this end, James Sutherland, the district chief, ordered Donald Sutherland to procure several canoes in the spring of 1818:

> if you could get Mantros [a Canadian freeman] to build a large canoe or two it would be a great service at least you ought to get 2 or 3 half size canoes made fore the use of your District the trade in that quarter must be extended and crafts of that size will be most convenient fore that purpose (HBCA, B.16/a/1, pp. 20-21).

The Albany traders remained outside East Winnipeg in 1817-18, and Slater and his men returned to Red Lake House. The Nor'Westers

TABLE 7

Conversions of Berens River Fur Returns to the Made Beaver Standard

(Using Albany's 1809 Standard)

Species	Fur Returns			
	1819-20		1820-21	
	Quantity	MB	Quantity	MB
Bears, black prime	15	45	43	129
Bears, common and cub	1	2	3	6
Bears, brown prime	1	2	3	6
Beaver, whole	79	79	209	209
Beaver, half	59	49	101	55
Castoreum (lbs.)	-	-	7	4
Fishers	18	18	20	20
Foxes, cross	15	30	9	18
Foxes, grey	18	18	12	12
Foxes, red	10	10	31	31
Lynx	510	510	795	795
Martens, prime	1,136	578	695	347
Martens, common	12	4	5	2
Mink	54	14	48	16
Muskrats	2,608	435	4,514	752
Otters, prime	84	168	232	464
Otters, common and cub	37	37	43	43
Rabbits	630	52	720	60
Wolverines	1	1	5	5
Total Value of Returns in Made Beaver		2,052		2,974
Total Value of Returns in Pounds Sterling		1,316		1,815
Conversion Ratio		1.56		1.64
Average Conversion Ratio			1.60	

Sources: HBCA, B.16/d/1, fo. 21d; B.3/d/125

TABLE 8

Berens River Fur Returns 1816-21

Season	Value of Returns in Pounds Sterling	Value of Returns in Made Beaver *
1816-17	1,454	2,326
1817-18	1,853	2,965
1818-19	1,837	2,939
1819-20	1,316	2,106
1820-21	1,815	2,904

* Values of returns in made beaver have been calculated by multiplying the value of returns in pounds sterling by a factor of 1.60. This conversion factor has been obtained from the detailed breakdown of fur returns in table 7.

Sources: HBCA, B.16/e/2, 3

opposed them there and also sent some men to winter at Bad Lake on the Bloodvein River. Slater was unable to send an outfit alongside them because "none of us knows the road to Bad Lake" (HBCA, B.177/a/10, fo. 8d). In addition to the Nor'Westers, Slater had to contend with the York traders at Big Fall who gave debt (credit) to some of the Red Lake Indians. During the winter, the York trader at Rainy Lake, Donald McPherson, requested that James Sanderson be sent down from the Albany outpost at Escabitchewan. This petition was refused, however, as Edward Mowat explained, "as I have non that understands the Indians I cannot do it" (ibid., fo. 8d).

The Albany traders in the Red Lake District faced a difficult task in competing with the Nor'Westers. The Indians of the area were accustomed to competition, and they used every means available to get the best terms of exchange for their furs. James Slater observed in 1817, "The Indians have long been used to have rival traders among them... on this account principally they are now better versed in traffick and are more apt to neglect their debts" (HBCA, B.177/e/1, fo. 3). The Red Lake area was also depleted of beaver. Bad Lake was the only place that beaver were taken in 1816-17, and Slater reported that most of the Indians there took their furs to Big Fall House (HBCA, B.177/e/2, fo. 1d).

On 14 September 1818 Donald Sutherland left Norway House with the Big Fall House trading outfit in two canoes. His complement of men numbered eight, most of whom had spent the summer at Big Fall working

TABLE 9

Changing Composition of Fur Returns from East Winnipeg, 1796-1821

Type of Skin (selected species)	Albany Returns (Lake Sanderson District)		York Returns (Big Fall District)
	1796-1800 (4 yr. avg.)	1805-10 (4 yr. avg.)	1819-21 (2 yr. avg.)
Bear	7	17	33
Beaver, whole	1,412	646	144
Beaver, half	657	262	80
Beaver, coat (lbs.)	125	4	0
Beaver, castoreum (lbs.)	25	9	4
Fisher	7	17	19
Fox	4	8	45
Hare	0	248	675
Lynx	144	142	653
Marten	308	754	924
Mink	25	71	51
Moose	39	56	0
Muskrat	33	282	3,561
Otter	122	162	198
Wolverine	14	5	3

Sources: HBCA, B.3/d/107, 109, 110, 112, 117, 118, 119, 122, 125; B.16/d/1

on the house and gardens. Sutherland arrived at the house on 28 September, and two days later was surprised at the arrival of two North West Company canoes. The Nor'Westers were headed by John Crebassa and the party included men, women, children, and a large number of dogs.[64] Crebassa built his post 600 yards above Sutherland's house, and Sutherland countered this by building an outpost above Crebassa.

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[64] A typical NWC outfit was detailed by George Nelson in his journal for 1818-19. At his Jack Head post there were six men, four women, fifteen children, and sixteen dogs (Nelson 1818-19:1).

Crebassa was a clerk in the North West Company's Lac Ouinipique Department. The department had been virtually shut down during the previous two seasons. In 1815-16 there were nine men in the department, and in 1816-17 there were only four. In those two years only Fort Alexander was kept open. For the 1818-19 season the department was increased to eighteen men, enough to establish outposts at Jack Head and Big Fall (HBCA, F.4/32). The man in charge of the department that year was Duncan McDougall, but he died at Fort Alexander on 25 October 1818 (Nelson 1818-19:20). Following his death John McBean, the proprietor of neighbouring Red River Department, assumed control of Lac Ouinipique (ibid., p. 20). George Nelson was in charge of the Jack Head post. He had returned after three years of service in the Pic River Department on the northeast shore of Lake Superior, followed by a two-year sojourn in Lower Canada.

Crebassa and Sutherland got along fairly well at Big Fall during the winter of 1818-19. There were the usual arguments over Indian debts and the rights to certain fishing places, but no serious confrontations arose. In the fall of 1818 George Nelson received word from Crebassa that he had poor prospects in the fur trade. Nelson noted that "the HB's have such influence over that superstitious and incestuous set of Indians as to prevent them from going openly to C's [Crebassa's]" (Nelson 1818-19:19). On 13 March 1819 Nelson crossed the frozen Lake Winnipeg and visited Crebassa. He found Crebassa and his people living mainly on rabbits and a few fish, but they had procured few furs. Nelson visited Donald Sutherland and found him to be "like all Englishmen [Sutherland was actually a Scotsman]; plain, honest and very open" (ibid., p. 38). Sutherland had established himself among the Indians of the area, and Crebassa found it difficult to win them over to his side. Two of Crebassa's men told Nelson that "the indians of that quarter wont see them, and even menaced them with their lives" (ibid., p.24). By the spring Sutherland had traded twelve packs of furs, and observed: "I actually think that they [Nor'Westers] have not made two packs at this place, including Moose and Deer [caribou] skins" (HBCA, B.16/a/1, p. 28).

Sutherland's fur returns were hurt less by Crebassa than by Nelson's post at Jack Head, and posts in the neighbouring Red Lake and Island Lake Departments. Nelson at Jack Head was particularly effective in attracting Indians because he kept a supply of medicine with him. According to Sutherland, "this cursed medicine is more hurt to us than all the Canadians that is hear to oppose us" (HBCA, B.16/a/1, p. 26). The "medicine" may have been European in origin, or a locally produced herbal remedy. The Grand Medicine Society, or Midewiwin, was a powerful force in the lives of the Ojibwa who lived in the region (see also Steinbring 1981). Nelson was invited to a Meetaywee on 7 June 1819, and he commented that he "admired [the ceremony] a good deal, having now a far better idea of their Theology, and understand their language also much better than I did 13 years ago when I saw them the first time" (Nelson 1818-19:12). Nelson's experience and understanding of Ojibwa culture may have influenced his decision to keep a supply of medicine at his post.

At the close of the 1818-19 season, Sutherland prepared a report on the Berens River District and also provided the company with a sketch map of the East Winnipeg Country (fig. 25). Details of this sketch map were quickly drafted onto Arrowsmith's 1822 Map of America (fig. 28) to fill in an area that had been either empty or falsely represented on previous maps. Figures 26 and 27 depict Sutherland's sketches of the Berens and Poplar rivers and compare them with their modern equivalents to reveal Sutherland's perception and toponymy of this region.

Like George Holdsworth's 1815 report on the East Winnipeg country, Donald Sutherland's 1819 report noted the remarkable decline in the beaver population. He wrote that this region:

> was once famous for harbing Beaver and Otters formerly-but-at present thos Anomals is nearly extermenated being long hunted by Different Traders--the only skins that may be hunted thereabouts now is the Martins Cats and a few Otters--Rabbits is also very plenty (HBCA, B.16/e/2, fo. 1d).

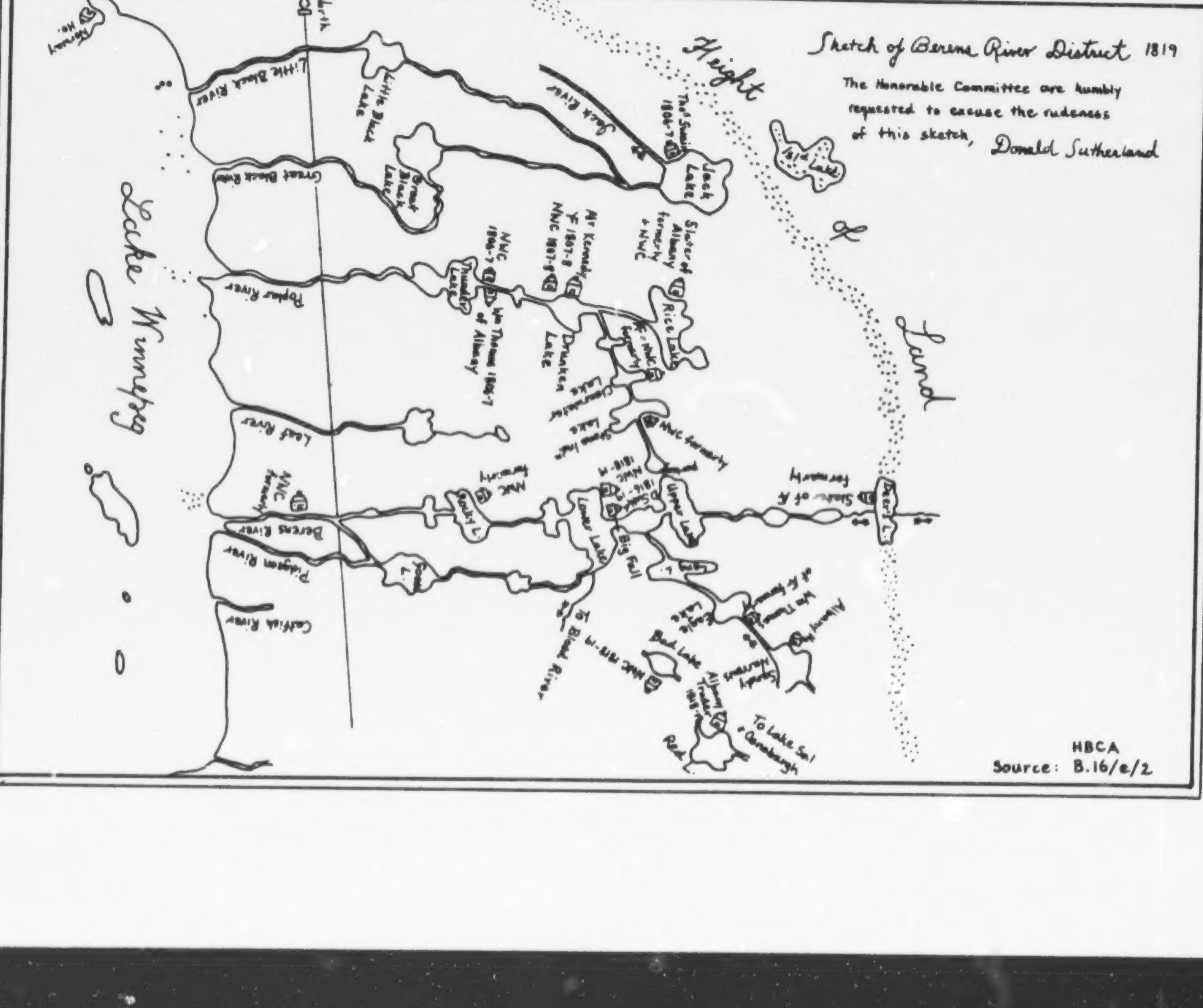
This pattern of resource depletion is shown in table 9. By comparing the earlier Albany fur returns from East Winnipeg with those of York from roughly the same area, one can easily see the rapid decline in the quantity of beaver pelts being trapped in the region and the declining value of that skin in the total returns of the trading district.

On the Albany front, Slater returned to Red Lake in 1818-19 but the Nor'Westers under Harris pressed beyond him once again to settle at Bad Lake. Slater was unable to follow them and remarked that Harris and his men would not only hurt his trade but also that of York's Big Fall House, a prediction that was fulfilled. Slater and his men returned to Osnaburgh House in the spring with only eight packs of furs (HBCA, B.177/a/10, fo. 17).

Donald Sutherland was intent on extending the York trade in East Winnipeg and returned from Norway House in the fall of 1819 with an increased outfit in order to settle two outposts. James Robertson was selected to take a party of four men and goods in a large canoe to settle Bad Lake on the Bloodvein River. The York men knew virtually nothing about Bad Lake, save that it lay near the headwaters of the Bloodvein, and that Canadians and Albany men had formerly wintered there. Robertson's journey up the Bloodvein River was slow and hazardous, just as John Best's had been in 1794. The trip required over seventy portages and Robertson described the country as: "swamps and High Mountains of Rocks, there is small Lakes, in with in, throw [through] the country" (HBCA, B.16/e/3, fo. 1).

The second outpost was established on the upper reaches of the Berens River at Sandy Point Lake (present Goose Lake). Robert Sutherland, a younger brother of Donald, was placed in charge of this outfit, which consisted of three men and a small canoe. Donald

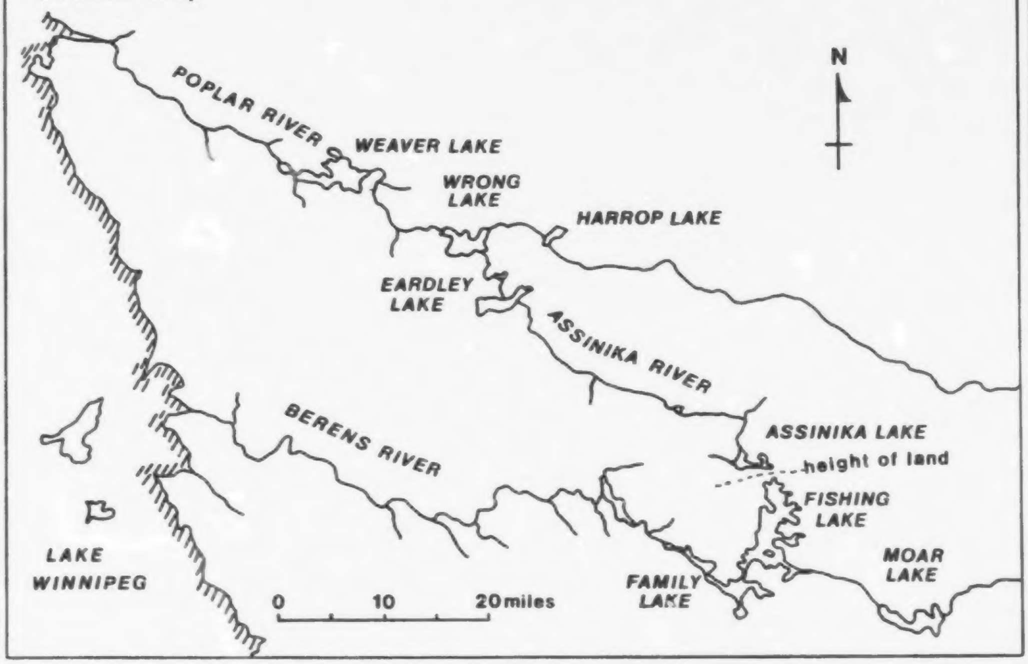
FIGURE 25: DONALD SUTHERLAND'S MAP OF BERENS RIVER DISTRICT, 1819 [redrawn from original]


Sketch of Berens River District 1819
The Honorable Committee are humbly requested to excuse the rudeness of this sketch, Donald Sutherland
Height & Land
North
Lake Winnepeg
Norway Ho.
Little Black River
Little Black Lake
Great Black River
Great Black Lake
Jack River
Jack Lake
Thos Swain 1806-7
Isle Lake
Slater of Albany formerly & NWC
Rice Lake
Mr Kennedy XY 1807-8
NWC 1807-8
Drunken Lake
NWC 1806-7
Wm Thomas 1806-7 of Albany
Thunder Lake
Poplar River
Clearwater Lake
Stone Indian Lake
NWC formerly
Leaf River
Deer L.
Slater of A formerly
Upper Lake
Sinclair 1816-17
NWC 1818-19
Lower Lake
Big Fall
NWC formerly
Rocky L.
NWC formerly
Berens River
Pigeon River
Catfish River
To Blood River
NWC 1818-19
Bad Lake
Eagle Lake
Wm Thomas of A formerly
Albany
Sandy Narrows
Albany Trader 1818-19
To Lake Sal & Osnaburgh
Red L.

HBCA
Source: B.16/e/2

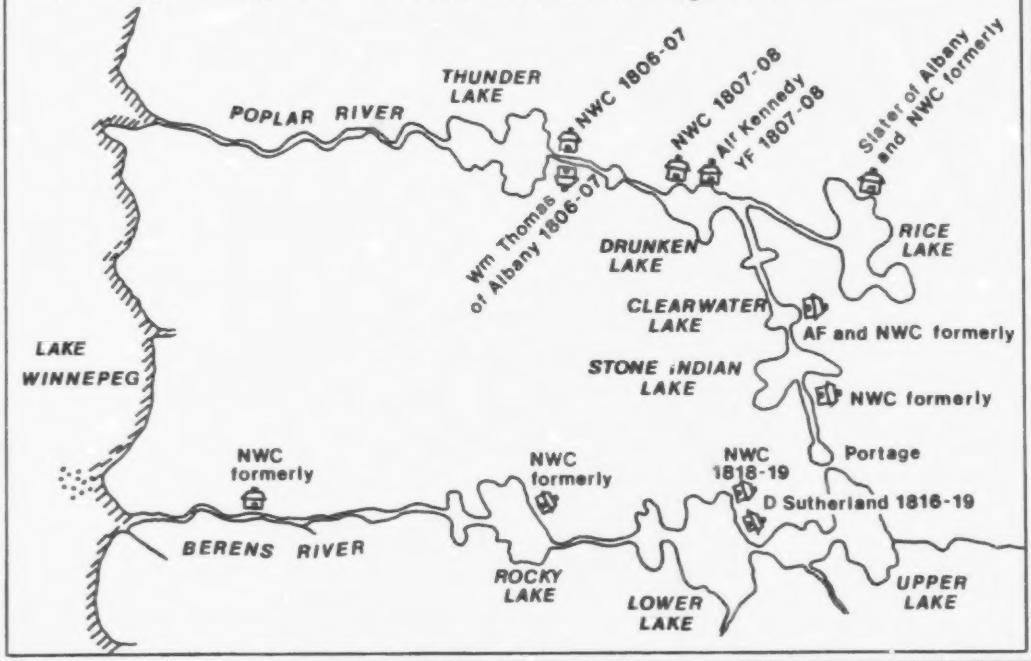
FIGURE 26: BERENS AND POPLAR RIVERS, 1819

Modern Map



POPLAR RIVER
WEAVER LAKE
WRONG LAKE
HARROP LAKE
EARDLEY LAKE
ASSINIKA RIVER
N
BERENS RIVER
ASSINIKA LAKE
height of land
FISHING LAKE
MOAR LAKE
FAMILY LAKE
LAKE WINNIPEG
0
10
20miles

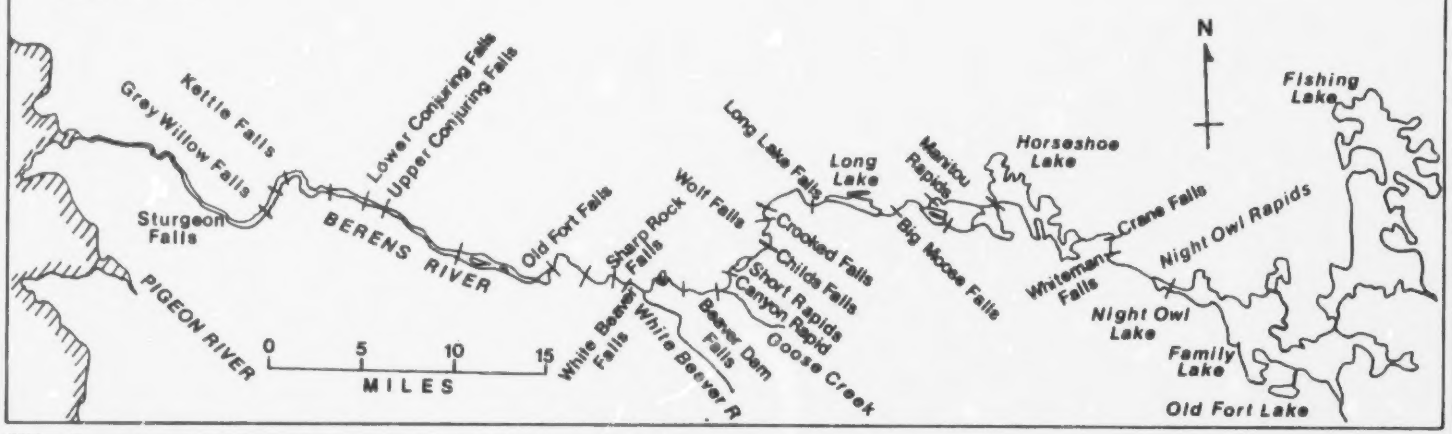
Sutherland's Map, 1819 - a section redrawn from figure 25



THUNDER LAKE
POPLAR RIVER
NWC 1806-07
Wm Thomas of Albany 1806-07
NWC 1807-08
Air Kennedy YF 1807-08
Slater of Albany and NWC formerly
DRUNKEN LAKE
RICE LAKE
CLEARWATER LAKE
AF and NWC formerly
LAKE WINNEPEG
STONE INDIAN LAKE
NWC formerly
Portage
NWC formerly
NWC formerly
NWC 1818-19
D Sutherland 1818-19
BERENS RIVER
ROCKY LAKE
LOWER LAKE
UPPER LAKE

FIGURE 27: BERENS RIVER, 1819

Modern Map


N
Fishing Lake
Kettle Falls
Grey Willow Falls
Sturgeon Falls
Lower Conjuring Falls
Upper Conjuring Falls
BERENS RIVER
PIGEON RIVER
0
5
10
15
MILES
Old Fort Falls
Sharp Rock Falls
White Beaver Falls
White Beaver R
Wolf Falls
Beaver Dam Falls
Long Lake Falls
Crooked Falls
Childs Falls
Short Rapids
Canyon Rapid
Goose Creek
Long Lake
Manitou Rapids
Big Moose Falls
Horseshoe Lake
Crane Falls
Whiteman Falls
Night Owl Rapids
Night Owl Lake
Family Lake
Old Fort Lake

Sutherland's Map, 1819 - a section redrawn from figure 25

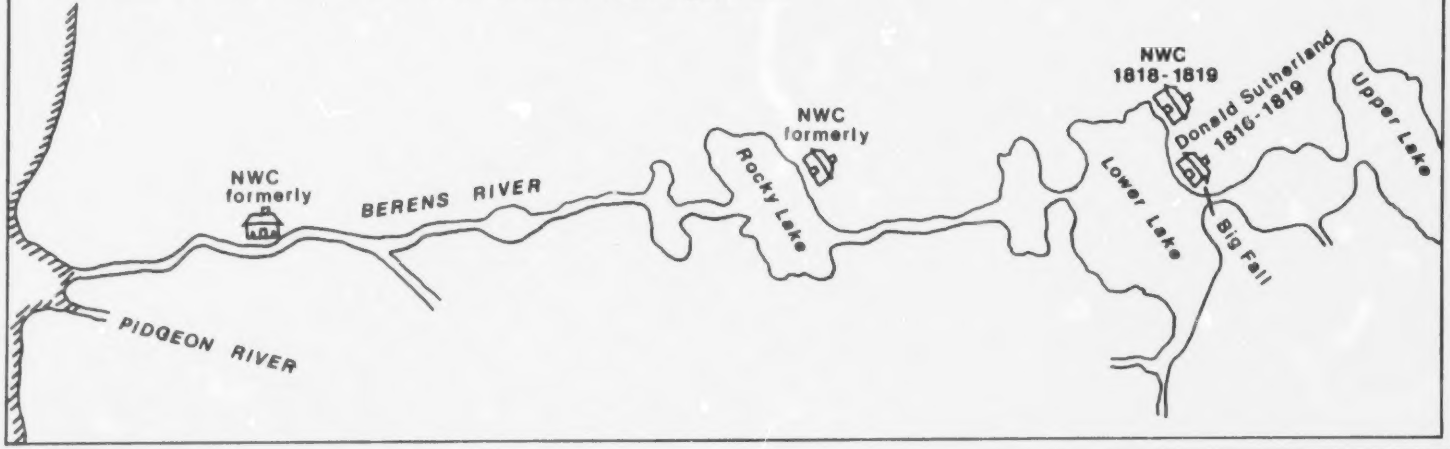
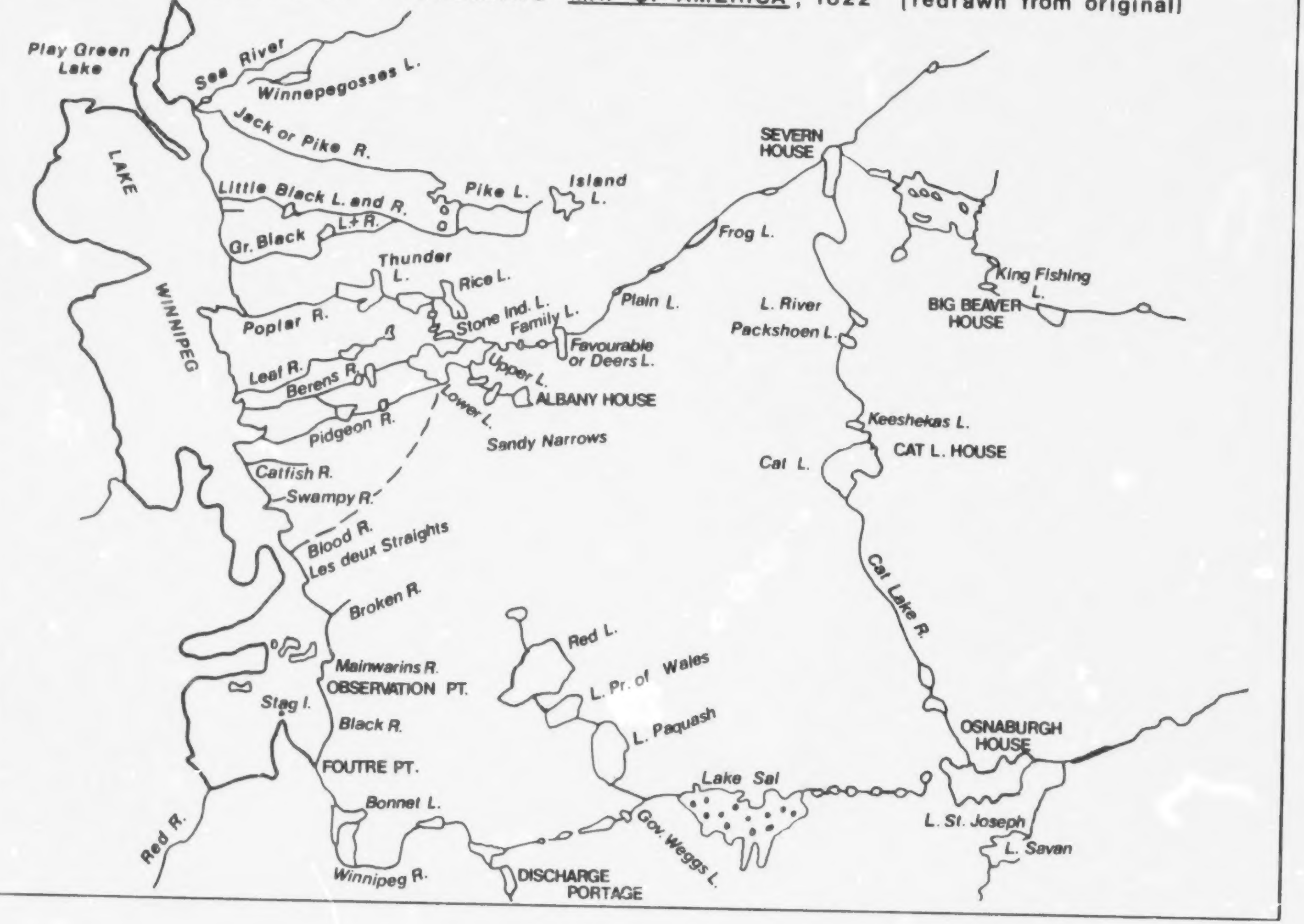

NWC formerly
BERENS RIVER
PIDGEON RIVER
NWC formerly
Rocky Lake
NWC 1818-1819
Donald Sutherland 1816-1819
Lower Lake
Big Fall
Upper Lake

FIGURE 28: A SECTION OF ARROWSMITH'S MAP OF AMERICA, 1822 [redrawn from original]


Play Green Lake
Sea River
Winnepegosses L.
Jack or Pike R.
LAKE
WINNIPEG
Little Black L. and R.
L.+R.
Gr. Black
Pike L.
Island L.
Thunder L.
Rice L.
Poplar R.
Stone Ind. L.
Family L.
Plain L.
Frog L.
SEVERN HOUSE
Favourable or Deers L.
Leaf R.
Berens R.
Upper L.
ALBANY HOUSE
Lower L.
Pidgeon R.
Sandy Narrows
Catfish R.
Swampy R.
Blood R.
Les deux Straights
Broken R.
Mainwarins R.
OBSERVATION PT.
Stag I.
Black R.
FOUTRE PT.
Bonnet L.
Winnipeg R.
Red R.
DISCHARGE PORTAGE
Gov. Weggs L.
Lake Sal
Red L.
L. Pr. of Wales
L. Paquash
L. River
Packshoen L.
Keeshekas L.
CAT L. HOUSE
Cat L.
Cat Lake R.
OSNABURGH HOUSE
L. St. Joseph
L. Savan
King Fishing L.
BIG BEAVER HOUSE

Sutherland had been informed that the Albany traders knew the track to Sandy Point Lake very well, and had been long settled in that quarter. The track had been described to him by Indians as follows:

> from Great Rapid House to Sandy Point Lake there is fourteen portages throw rivers and the following Lakes 1st Long Lake [present Douglas Lake] 2nd Eagle Lake [present Moar Lake] 3rd Black Bear [present Sharpstone Lake] 4th Sandy Narrow Lake [present Stout Lake] and then Sandy Point Lake up toward the height of Land (ibid., fo. 1d).

The country about the Berens River at its headwaters was described by Robert Sutherland in much the same terms that had been applied to the headwaters of the Bloodvein: "it is all a Mountainous Rockie Country, with small Lakes hear and there" (ibid., fo. 2).

The York men under Robertson at Bad Lake competed with the North West Company post under Harris that was outfitted from Red Lake. Both posts had a poor season in 1819-20 as a large part of the Indians in that area were killed by a measles epidemic. This disease, called the distemper by Sutherland, carried off many of the "King Fisher tribe" who hunted in the vicinity of Bad Lake and consequently little was traded at either post. The York men at Sandy Point Lake were slightly more successful in trade, being unopposed that winter, but the death of many Indians in that region also limited their returns. The trade in furs likewise dropped considerably at the Big Fall House and Donald Sutherland observed: "the Dreadful Death among the Indian over the whole of this part of the country is the occasion of it" (HBCA, B.16/e/3, p. 26) (see also Ray 1974:94-116).

The Albany men encountered similar effects from the "Dreadful Death" in their Red Lake District. Slater's principal post that year was Escabeechevan (Escabitchewan) while outposts were settled at Red Lake and Big Lake (probably present Trout Lake). The North West Company had posts at Red Lake and Bad Lake. William Harris, who was in charge of Bad Lake, reported that almost all of the Indians there (numbering about seventy) died in the epidemic during the fall of 1819 (HBCA, B.64/e/2, fo. 3). Among the casualties of the measles epidemic was Thomas Sanderson who was at Red Lake that season; he died on 11 October 1819 after a brief illness (HBCA, B.64/a/8, fo. 10).

The Big Fall House was rebuilt during the summer of 1820 making it larger and more comfortable. Sutherland took pride in its development from a small winter outpost to that of a substantial year-round trading establishment. The gardens were becoming productive, yielding eighty bushels of potatoes and four bushels of barley during the 1819 season, and Sutherland had hopes of doubling that total in 1820. His men gained valuable experience and firsthand knowledge about the East Winnipeg Country and Sutherland rated their abilities as being much superior to the Nor'Westers who had only occasionally sent men to trade there. He wrote:

> Another great advantage we have the servants knows the Indians and the country all round, and I may safely say that it was the eableness and the activeness of the men that prevented the N.W.C. from sending back to Berens River again this year as well as last (HBCA, B.16/e/3, fo. 3d).

By 1820 the York men had established their dominance over the Nor'Westers in the East Winnipeg Country. In reality, however, few furs were left to be fought over and the area could at best support two or three trading posts. The Hudson's Bay Company had finally found an effective approach to trading in the East Winnipeg Country by supplying its men from Norway House and transporting them by canoes to their winter stations upriver from the east coast of Lake Winnipeg. Although beaver had almost disappeared from the region, other species could still be procured in sufficient numbers to make the trade profitable.

Donald Sutherland returned to Big Fall House in the fall of 1820. He reached his post on 2 September 1820, taking thirteen days to travel from Norway House. At the post he found a large encampment of Indians who had gathered to take their winter debts. Since some of them had come from a considerable distance, Sutherland felt that this boded well for the season's fur trade. He gave out debts to the Indians and also supplied them with rum, ammunition and tobacco as presents to encourage them to remain faithful to his post. A second post was settled at Sandy Point Lake by Robert Sutherland and five men. Meanwhile, a party of men under James Robertson came from Norway House and settled Sandy Bar House at the mouth of the Berens River. Sutherland had earlier indicated that Robertson's outfit should settle at the mouth of the Bloodvein, and the report of his own people building at Sandy Bar prompted him to remark, "it is a laughable storie to have two houses now fore the same Indians that hath traded hear the four last years" (HBCA, B.16/a/4, fo. 12). He learned later that Robertson had acted on the orders of the district chief, James Sutherland, and that another outfit was to be deployed from Sandy Bar to the Jack Head during the winter in an attempt to drive the Nor'Westers from that quarter. This foray against the Nor'Westers did not materialize and Sandy Bar House proved to be a poor location for a trading post.

The Sandy Point Lake area, despite the earlier devastations by disease among the Indians, produced substantial returns of "good furs." The York men of that post were indirectly opposed by Nor'Westers from the Nipigon Department who wintered at Iron Island. The Nipigon men had never completely withdrawn from the Severn headwaters and Island Lake region, and the post at Iron Island was a westward extension of that trade. The exact location of the post or island is unclear, but remarks in the Big Fall post journal indicate that Deer Lake was a day's journey beyond Iron Island. A probable location is thus an island in Favourable Lake, which is thirty miles southwest of Deer Lake and well known today for its iron deposits.

On 5 June 1821, Sutherland and seven men embarked for Norway House in two large canoes with the season's trade of twenty-eight packs of furs (roughly 2,900 made beaver). Ten days later, while paddling along the eastern coast of Lake Winnipeg between the Poplar and Mukutawa Rivers, they were passed by a large North West Company canoe manned by eleven men who informed the York men of the merger of the North West Company with the Hudson's Bay Company. While the Canadians sped past them on their way to Norway House, Sutherland and his men paddled on with the last cargo of furs that the East Winnipeg country had produced during the era of competition between the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company.

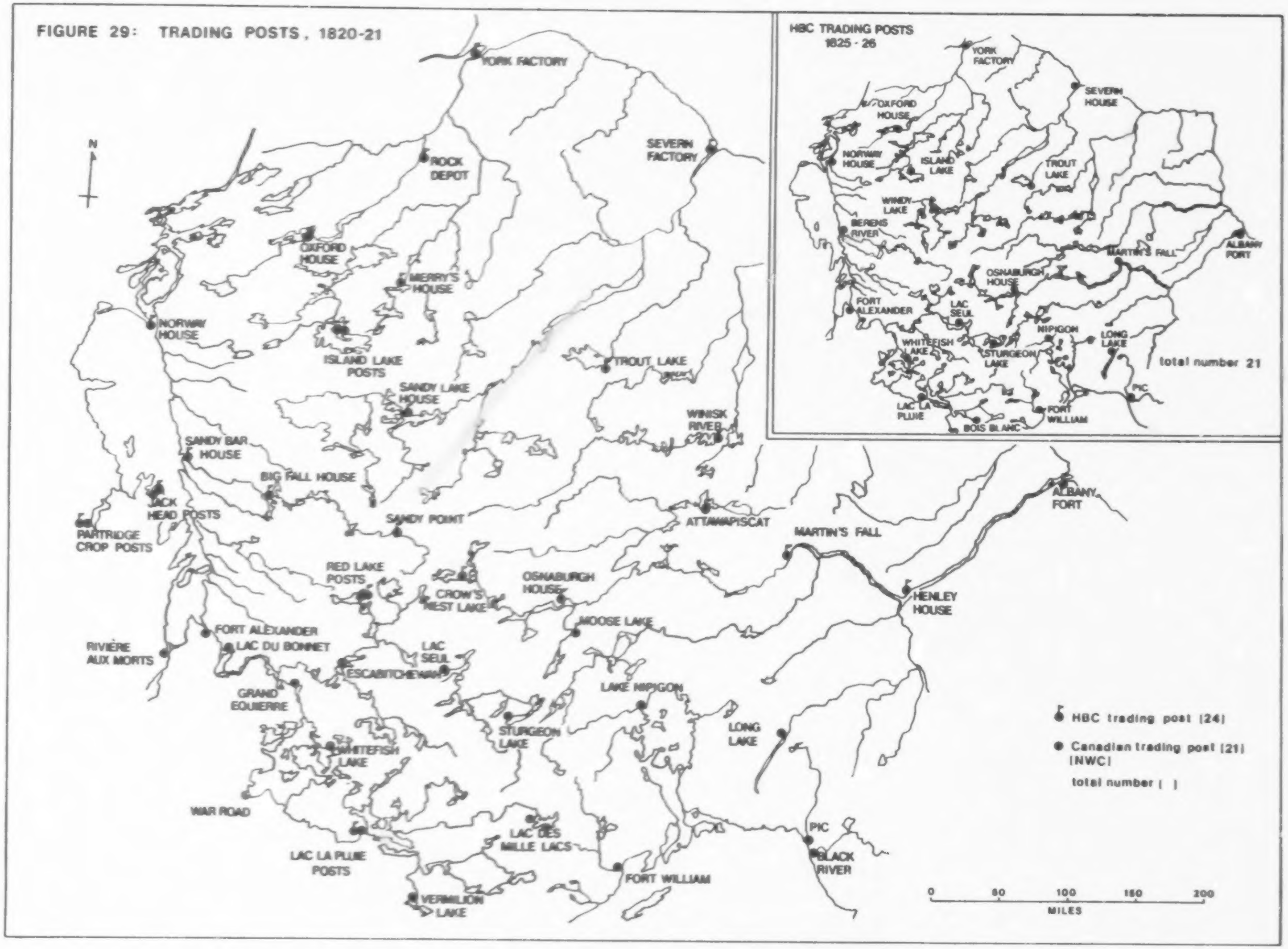
Chapter XI

THE QUIET YEARS: HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY MONOPOLY RULE AFTER 1821

The union of the North West and Hudson's Bay companies in 1821 brought an end to fur trade competition in the Northwest. In the years to follow the new Hudson's Bay Company faced challenges from rival traders along the American frontier, and internal competition from the growing number of free traders in Rupert's Land, but these developments were minor and relatively localized in comparison to the pre-1821 situation. Within the Little North, the company exercised virtual monopoly control until 1870. There was periodic competition with American fur traders in the Lac la Pluie District and along the shore of Lake Superior, but in the boreal forest the Hudson's Bay Company was the only non-native establishment. This situation enabled the company to tighten its trading practices and reduce the number of men and trading posts. The labour force in the Northern Department was cut from about 2,000 in 1821 to fewer than 700 men in 1826 (Williams 1983:51). During the same period trading posts were abandoned throughout the northwest. In the Little North twenty-eight posts were operating in 1820-21. Five years later the number of posts was reduced to fourteen. Figure 29 illustrates the pattern of post abandonment between 1821 and 1826.

During the summer of 1821 hasty arrangements were made at the various bayside factories for the transition to monopoly rule. Many of the fine points concerning the fur trade had been hammered out in London during the winter, but their implementation required considerable effort from the chief factors who had been appointed by the new London Committee. The chief factors were responsible for the trading districts of the company, and were chosen from the pool of experienced officers of both the Hudson's Bay and North West companies. A total of twenty-five were selected: ten HBC men and fifteen NWC men. To assist these chief factors, twenty-eight chief traders were chosen; eleven from the Hudson's Bay Company and seventeen from the North West Company (Rich 1960, vol. 3:408). The company retained the district infrastructure of the old Hudson's Bay Company, as well as the division of its territory into Northern and Southern Departments. Two men were appointed to govern the operations of these departments; George Simpson in the north and William Williams in the south. The Northern Department overshadowed its southern counterpart in terms of its scale and value of operations. Governor Simpson also rose above Williams in power and stature, and in 1826 Simpson took over as governor of the entire operation of the company in North America.

FIGURE 29: TRADING POSTS, 1820-21


N
YORK FACTORY
ROCK DEPOT
SEVERN FACTORY
OXFORD HOUSE
MERRY'S HOUSE
NORWAY HOUSE
ISLAND LAKE POSTS
TROUT LAKE
SANDY LAKE HOUSE
WINISK RIVER
SANDY BAR HOUSE
BIG FALL HOUSE
JACK HEAD POSTS
PARTRIDGE CROP POSTS
SANDY POINT
ATTAWAPISCAT
ALBANY FORT
MARTIN'S FALL
RED LAKE POSTS
CROW'S NEST LAKE
OSNABURGH HOUSE
HENLEY HOUSE
MOOSE LAKE
FORT ALEXANDER
LAC DU BONNET
RIVIÈRE AUX MORTS
ESCABITCHEWAN
LAC SEUL
GRAND EQUIERRE
LAKE NIPIGON
STURGEON LAKE
LONG LAKE
WHITEFISH LAKE
WAR ROAD
LAC DES MILLE LACS
PIC
BLACK RIVER
LAC LA PLUIE POSTS
FORT WILLIAM
VERMILION LAKE
HBC trading post (24)
Canadian trading post (21) (NWC)
total number ( )
0
50
100
150
200
MILES
HBC TRADING POSTS
1825 - 26
YORK FACTORY
SEVERN HOUSE
OXFORD HOUSE
NORWAY HOUSE
ISLAND LAKE
TROUT LAKE
WINDY LAKE
BERENS RIVER
MARTIN'S FALL
ALBANY FORT
OSNABURGH HOUSE
FORT ALEXANDER
LAC SEUL
NIPIGON
LONG LAKE
WHITEFISH LAKE
STURGEON LAKE
total number 21
PIC
LAC LA PLUIE
FORT WILLIAM
BOIS BLANC

The arrangements for the 1821-22 trading season split the East Winnipeg Country into two districts: Bas de la Rivière (in 1822 the district name was changed to Winipic River) in the south, headed by former Nor'Wester John Warren Dease, and Norway House in the north under the management of HBC man Colin Robertson. Robertson's selection as chief factor of Norway House District was somewhat of a patronage appointment. Governor Simpson described Robertson in 1821 as "useless, speculative and extravagant" (Williams 1975:170n), but he was nevertheless retained in the new company. Others with long experience and dedication to the former fur companies were not so fortunate. One victim of the numbers game was Donald Sutherland. He had served the company for twenty-six years, and had a proven record of success in the fur trade. Simpson characterized him in 1821 as "A strictly honest correct well behaved man and excellent trader but deficient in Education" (HBCA, B.239/f/12, fos. 6d,7). Perhaps his lack of education prevented his promotion. Faced with the prospect of returning inland as a subordinate clerk, Sutherland decided to resign from the service. In the fall of 1822 he boarded the company's ship Prince of Wales with his two native-born children and returned to the British Isles (HBCA, B.239/z/33, fo. 1).

The fur trade in the East Winnipeg Country during the first winter of 1821-22 was somewhat disorganized. The substantial trading post at the Big Fall on the Berens River was abandoned in favour of Sandy Bar House at the mouth of the river. This post was outfitted from Norway House, and may have been managed by Donald Sutherland during the winter of 1821-22. Another post was established acoss the lake at Jack Head by the Bas de la Rivière traders. The Jack Head post competed with the Berens River post, and the former was closed after only one season. To the east, inland from Lake Winnipeg, the company encountered more complicated jurisdictional problems. The country about the height of land was still poorly known, and traders from York, Severn, and Albany vied for its control. The new London Committee recognized that overlaps had often occurred in this area, and recommended that:

> it will be necessary for the Councils to concert such arrangements as will prevent any misunderstanding in the future. It may moreover be found that some modification of the boundary will be convenient and beneficial, and we wish enquiry to be made into this matter (Fleming 1940:301).

Governor Simpson, however, discouraged the committee about the region, writing that "the country lying between Island Lake, the Severn waters and the sources of Berens River is of considerable extent, but little known according to Indian reports, poor in Furrs" (HBCA, D.4/87, fo. 50d). The boundary question was thus of little consequence in Simpson's view, and posts on all sides of the area were systematically abandoned. By 1826 the only post operating near the boundary between the Northern and Southern Departments was Windy Lake (present Favourable Lake), an outpost of Island Lake House. In 1831 the Windy Lake post was also abandoned.

Simpson believed that reducing the numbers of posts in certain areas would help to conserve fur bearers and nurse the population of beaver back to its former size. Concern for beaver populations reflected both the dramatic decline in beaver returns since about 1800, and the continued high prices for beaver skins in London (see fig.). In addition to closing posts, the company introduced a quota system in 1825 to regulate the annual take of beaver skins in each district. The quota established for the Winnipeg District in 1825-26 was a mere twenty-seven beaver skins, and that of Norway House was twenty-nine (HBCA, D.4/89). It was hoped that limiting the trade in beaver skins would allow the beaver to flourish and thus provide greater returns in the future.

Simpson's policy of abandoning posts and establishing beaver quotas was guided by a fundamental desire to cut costs. It was also predicated on his belief that with monopoly control he could dictate the terms of trade with the Indians. The closing of so many posts meant that Indians had to travel greater distances to obtain their necessary supplies. This pattern of trade saved the company the expense of transporting men and goods to remote outposts, but it also had several disadvantages. Some Indians simply refused to participate regularly in the fur trade, while others moved closer to the operating posts and thereby encroached on the lands of Indians already living in the vicinity. Simpson admitted these problems in a letter to the London Committee dated 18 July 1831:

> There is one evil attending the system of abandoning Districts and Posts for the purpose of nursing the country which we did not forsee when it was introduced, and that is that the country thereby becomes common whereas formerly each band had its own hunting grounds, which, altho' not strictly watched were kept in better condition by its proprietors than it can be now when open to strangers whose wants compel them to leave their own lands and encroach on those of their neighbours in order to obtain necessary supplies at the Establishment (HBCA, D.4/98, fo. 30d).

One solution to the problem of overhunting in certain areas was to try to establish a system of family or band hunting territories within each district. Indians in the Little North, however, were not readily inclined to such a system. During the period of competition, they had moved freely from post to post and to other districts in search of better prices for their furs. When fur bearers and game were still abundant this movement precipitated relatively few animosities between neighbouring groups. Even when fur bearers and game became scarce the Indians were reluctant to adopt a territorial system of land tenure. George Holdsworth described this attitude among the Indians living east of Lake Winnipeg in 1815:

> the tribes generally live in peace and friendship with each other; and altho the necessity of migration has caused them to encroach on each others territories the circumstance does not appear to have given rise to any jealousies, and several

> tribes may be seen occupying the same tract of country in the utmost peace and harmony (HBCA, B.16/e/1, fo. 6d).

Similarly, James Sutherland wrote of the Indians in the vicinity of Jack River House (present Norway House) in 1815, "The hunting ground is common to the whole, and any stranger may come and enjoy the same privilege without molestation" (HBCA, B.154/e/1, fo. 6). Attempts by the company's officers to convince the Indians to establish hunting territories in the 1820s and 1830s met with little success.

Ironically, the solution to the problem of overhunting beaver was determined overseas in the fashion salons of London and Paris. During the early 1840s the silk hat replaced the beaver hat in fashion, and the value of beaver skins plummeted. As a result, beaver populations recovered throughout much of the Northwest, and by the 1860s record numbers were being traded in many districts despite their reduced value (see fig.). Shortly after the fall in the value of beaver some groups of Indians in the Little North began to adopt the territorial hunting scheme proposed by the Hudson's Bay Company. Charles Bishop has suggested that hunting territories were established among the Osnaburgh House Ojibwa by 1850 (Bishop 1974:215). However, it appears that hunting territories in most of the area east of Lake Winnipeg were not well defined before the end of the nineteenth century (ibid., p. 219).

For much of the 1821-70 period the fur trade in the East Winnipeg Country was not intensively pursued. The principal trading post in the East Winnipeg watershed was Berens River House (previously called Sandy Bar House), located at the mouth of the river, which operated in most seasons. Occasionally outposts were established at various other locations. A post operated at Big Fall (also called Grand Rapid) on the Berens River in 1832-33, and from 1865 to 1870. Posts at the mouth of the Pigeon and Poplar Rivers were open in the years 1863-64 and 1869-70 respectively. A post was also in operation at Sandy Narrows during the winters of 1833-34, 1834-35, 1864-65, and 1869-70.

The company maintained a quiet unobtrusive presence in East Winnipeg. It made no further attempts to survey or map the region, as Peter Fidler and Donald Sutherland had before 1821. Indeed, the company preferred to keep rather secretive about the geography of its trading hinterlands in the face of increasing pressure from free traders to the south. When geological surveyors, Indian agents, and field anthropologists entered East Winnipeg in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, they were unaware of the intense activity that had taken place in the area before 1821. In a sense they rediscovered the area, and in the process, they replaced the forgotten fur traders' place names with their own toponymy.

Robert Bell, a government geologist who surveyed the eastern shore of Lake Winnipeg in 1878, reported that the country inland was "very imperfectly known" (Bell 1879:23cc). In the summer of 1886 Albert P. Low conducted a geological survey along the Berens River to the Little Grand Rapids, north to the Severn River, and finally down to Hudson

Bay. Unlike Bell, Low acknowledged that the local Hudson's Bay Company traders were familiar with parts of the country. However, their knowledge did not extend far into the history of the region, a fact that was made clear when Low discovered the remains of several buildings on Favourable Lake (formerly called Windy Lake by the Albany traders). He noted in his report:

> At the end of the peninsula the foundations of several old houses were discovered, out of which trees twelve inches in diameter were growing. These ruins evidently mark the site of some old Hudson Bay Company, or more probably North West Company trading post. Nothing was known about it at the Hudson's Bay Company post we visited (Low 1887:10f).

The fur trade history of the country east of Lake Winnipeg became further obscured as the surveyors imparted new names to the places which had been well known to traders a century earlier. The region soon came to be viewed by many scholars as a backwater area that had been untouched by the influences of the fur traders. This view prompted several anthropologists to visit the region in order to study the "isolated" native peoples. A. Irving Hallowell, who conducted field investigations among the Berens River Ojibwa in the 1930s, believed that during the fur trade period these people had "remained relatively remote from the traffic that passed through Lake Winnipeg" (Hallowell 1955:118). Robert W. Dunning studied the Ojibwa of the Pekangikum Reserve in 1954 and 1955, and he shared Hallowell's opinion about the slight impact of the early fur trade on the native inhabitants of the region. He believed that many groups of Indians had "remained for a long period almost completely isolated from the new civilization" (Dunning 1959:5).

Hallowell and Dunning cannot be blamed for their views on the early fur trade east of Lake Winnipeg. They relied on published historical works that said little about the fur trade in the Little North. In fact, some historians implied that the country east of Lake Winnipeg was avoided by European traders. For example, Arthur S. Morton wrote that "Lake Winnipeg was not of special interest to the fur traders save as a water-way along which, with an anxious eye for its treacherous storms, they moved to their wintering ground" (Morton 1973:438).

The archival records of the Hudson's Bay Company and the primary accounts of the Montreal fur traders provide a rather different view of the trade in the Little North. Local family histories, and possibly, oral traditions, if consulted on the subject, may also serve to increase our awareness of the early fur trade and its effects in the region. It is hoped that this study has shed new light to the fur trade history of the Little North, and contributes to a better understanding of both the Europeans and the Northern Algonquians who conducted the trade.

APPENDICES

The following tables and graphs provide a reference list of traders, trading districts, and fur returns of the Hudson's Bay Company in the Little North during the period 1760 to 1821. The information has been derived from a large number of Hudson's Bay Company archival documents. The data on fur returns comes from account books written at Albany Fort, Severn House, and York Factory. Information relating to the names of traders in charge of districts has been collated from journals, correspondence, and account books. In some cases the identity of individual traders could not be established, but future research may fill in these gaps. The graphs illustrate trends in the value and production of furs at Albany Fort and inland districts during the period 1740 to 1840. For some years data was unavailable because of missing account books or changes in the system of bookkeeping. Thus, for example, figure 30 shows the total value of fur returns at Albany Fort in made beaver only until 1810, at which time the company discontinued the made beaver standard in its official account books.

Appendix A

HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY TRADERS IN THE LITTLE NORTH, 1760-1821

ALBANY TRADERS, 1760-1821

Albany Fort

1760/61-1763/64	Robert Semple
1764/65-1767/68	Humphrey Marten
1768/69	Thomas Hopkins
1769/70-1773/74	Humphrey Marten
1774/75-1781/82	Thomas Hutchins
1782/83-1788/89	Edward Jarvis
1789/90	John McNab
1790/91-1791/92	Edward Jarvis
1792/93-1798/99	John McNab
1799/1800-1809/10	John Hodgson
1810/11-1813/14	Thomas Vincent
1814/15-1820/21	Jacob Corrigal

Henley House

1766/67-1768/69	William Richards
1769/70-1772/73	Thomas Powell
1773/74-1778/79	John Favell
1779/80	Thomas Atkinson
1780/81	John Favell
1781/82-1785/86	John McNab
1786/87-1790/91	John Hodgson
1791/92	Thomas Vincent
1792/93	John Hodgson
1793/94	Henry Moze
1794/95-1799/1800	Nicol Spence
1800/01	Magnus Birsay
1801/02	(?)
1802/03	Peter Taylor
1803/04	Robert Goodwin
1804/05-1806/07	Peter Taylor
1807/08	William Spence
1808/09	Thomas Miller
1809/10	John Eunson
1810/11-1813/14	John Davis

(cont'd.)

Henley House (cont'd.)

1814/15-1815/16	James Tate
1816/17	William Scarth
(abandoned in 1817)	
1818/19-1820/21	James Tate (headquarters at Long Lake)

Gloucester House

1778/79-1790/91	John Kipling
1791/92	James Sutherland
1792/93-1794/95	John Cobb
(abandoned in 1795)	
1812/13	John Eunson
1813/14-1814/15	Alexander Collie
1815/16	John Smith
1816/17-1817/18	William Thomas
(abandoned in 1818)	

Martin's Fall (named Ernest House in 1795/96)

1794/95	John Hodgson
1795/96	John Cobb
1796/97-1798/99	John Hodgson
1799/1800	John Best
1800/01	John McKay
1801/02	(?)
1802/03-1811/12	Jacob Corrigal
(abandoned in 1812)	
1818/19-1820/21	John Davis

Osnaburgh House (named Memenescua Lake in 1785/86)

1785/86-1786/87	John Best
1787/88-1792/93	Robert Goodwin
1793/94-1795/96	James Sutherland
1796/97	John Best
1797/98	Edward Clouston
1798/99-1799/1800	John McKay
1800/01-1802/03	John Best
1803/04	William Thomas
1804/05	Robert Goodwin
1805/06-1806/07	David Sanderson
1807/08-1808/09	John Sutherland
1809/10	William Thomas
1810/11	David Sanderson
1811/12-1813/14	William Thomas
1814/15-1817/18	John Davis
1818/19-1820/21	William McKay

Cat Lake

1788/89-1790/91	John Best
1791/92	(abandoned)
1792/93	Edward Clouston
1793/94-1795/96	David Sanderson
(abandoned in 1796)	

Red Lake

1790/91	James Sutherland
1791/92-1794/95	John Best
1795/96-1800/01	(abandoned)
1801/02	Magnus Birsay
1802/03-1803/04	Thomas Vincent
1804/05-1805/06	William Thomas
(abandoned in 1806)	
1816/17-1820/21	James Slater

Lac Seul

1791/92	Jean-Baptiste Turcot
1792/93-1802/03	(abandoned)
1803/04	William Thomas
(abandoned in 1804)	

Portage de l'Isle

1792/93	James Sutherland
1793/94-1794/95	Edward Clouston
(abandoned in 1795)	

Lake St. Anns

1792/93	John McKay
1793/94-1801/02	Jacob Corrigal
(abandoned in 1802)	

Lac la Pluie

1793/94-1796/97	John McKay
(abandoned in 1797)	

Red River

1793/94-1795/96	Robert Goodwin
1796/97	James Sutherland
1797/98	John McKay
1798/99-1800/01	Robert Goodwin
1801/02-1805/06	John McKay
1806/07	Thomas Vincent
1807/08-1809/10	John McKay
(abandoned in 1810)	

Pembina River

1808/09	Hugh Henry
1809/10	John Still
(abandoned in 1810)	

Wepinaban (also called Escabitchewan)

1795/96-1800/01	Magnus Birsay
1801/02-1807/08	(abandoned)
1808/09-1809/10	William Corrigal
(abandoned in 1810)	

Point au Foutre

1795/96	Edward Clouston
1796/97	John Cobb
1797/98-1801/02	Thomas Vincent
(abandoned in 1802)	

Fort Suspense

1795/96	John Best
(abandoned in 1796)	

Post Doubtful

1796/97	Edward Clouston (location: Manigatogan River)
1797/98-1800/01	John Cobb (location: Lake Manitoba Narrows)
1801/02	John Sutherland
1802/03	William Thomas
(abandoned in 1803)	

Lake Sanderson

1796/97-1804/05	David Sanderson
1805/06-1808/09	William Thomas
1809/10	David Sanderson
(abandoned in 1810)	

SEVERN TRADERS, 1760-1821

Severn House (named Severn Factory in 1808)

1760/61	Humphrey Marten
1761/62-1764/65	Andrew Graham
1765/66	Thomas Hopkins
1766/67-1768/69	Andrew Graham
1769/70	John Garbut
1770/71	Andrew Graham
1771/72	William Falconer
1772/73-1773/74	Andrew Graham
1774/75-1776/77	William Falconer
1777/78-1780/81	Matthew Cocking
1781/82	William Falconer
1782/83	John Hodgson
1783/84-1785/86	William Falconer
1786/87-1795/96	John Ballenden
1796/97-1809/10	Thomas Thomas
1810/11-1814/15	James Swain
1815/16-1817/18	John Tod
1818/19-1820/21	John Work

YORK TRADERS, 1760-1821

York Factory

1760/61	Andrew Graham
1761/62	Humphrey Marten
1762/63-1764/65	Ferdinand Jacobs
1765/66	Andrew Graham
1766/67-1770/71	Ferdinand Jacobs
1771/72	Andrew Graham
1772/73-1774/75	Ferdinand Jacobs
1775/76-1780/81	Humphrey Marten
1781/82	Matthew Cocking
1782/83	(abandoned)
1783/84-1785/86	Humphrey Marten
1786/87-1793/94	Joseph Colen

(cont.d)

York Factory (cont'd.)

1794/95	George Sutherland
1795/96-1797/98	Joseph Colen
1798/99-1801/02	John Ballenden
1802/03-1808/09	John McNab
1809/10-1813/14	William Hemmings Cook
1814/15-1816/17	Thomas Bunn
1817/18-1818/19	James Swain
1819/20-1820/21	Adam Snodie

Jack River (named Norway House in 1814)

1796/97	Henry Hallett
1797/98-1798/99	Charles Thomas Isham
(abandoned in 1799)	
1806/07	Thomas Swain
(abandoned in 1807)	
1812/13	William Sinclair
1813/14	(?)
1814/15	James Sutherland
1815/16-1818/19	James Kirkness
1819/20	Thomas Swain
1820/21	Alexander Kennedy

Oxford House

1798/99-1811/12	William Sinclair
1812/13-1814/15	(?)
1815/16	William Ross
1816/17	(?)
1817/18-1818/19	William Linklater
1819/20	(?)
1820/21	Henry Boulton

Merry's House

1801/02-1810/11	James Tate
1811/12-1812/13	Thomas Bunn
1813/14-1816/17	(?)
1817/18	Hugh Leslie
1818/19-1820/21	(?)

Berens River (named Pigeon River 1814-1817)

1814/15	George Holdsworth
1815/16-1820/21	Donald Sutherland

Appendix B

HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY FUR RETURNS IN THE LITTLE NORTH, 1760-1821

Albany Fort and Inland District Fur Returns, 1760-1821

	Value of Total Trade (made beaver)	Quantity of Beaver Skins
1760/61		
Albany Fort	15,555	13,147
1761/62		
Albany Fort	17,600	15,493
1762/63		
Albany Fort	7,358	6,794
1763/64		
Albany Fort	8,450	4,932
1764/65		
Albany Fort	10,431	7,797
1765/66		
Albany Fort	9,698	6,585
1766/67		
Albany Fort	9,674	4,774
Henley House	941	483
Total	10,615	5,257
1767/68		
Albany Fort	6,543	3,298
Henley House	901	572
Total	7,444	3,870

	Value of Total Trade (made beaver)	Quantity of Beaver Skins
1768/69		
Albany Fort	6,180	3,335
Henley House	270	272
Total	6,450	3,607
1769/70		
Albany Fort	6,283	2,228
Henley House	267	154
Total	6,530	2,382
1770/71		
Albany Fort	9,118	4,047
Henley House	301	127
Total	9,419	4,174
1771/72		
Albany Fort	5,553	2,691
Henley House	569	343
Total	6,122	3,034
1772/73		
Albany Fort	2,922	2,094
Henley House	421	300
Total	3,343	2,394
1773/74		
Albany Fort	4,053	2,171
Henley House	453	273
Total	4,506	2,444
1774/75		
Albany Fort	5,117	1,904
Henley House	629	433
Total	5,746	2,337
1775/76		
Albany Fort	4,643	2,050
Henley House	625	349
Total	5,268	2,408

	Value of Total Trade (made beaver)	Quantity of Beaver Skins
1776/77		
Albany Fort	5,551	2,588
Henley House	1,359	1,006
Total	6,910	3,594
1777/78		
Albany Fort	4,906	2,350
Henley House	2,036	1,350
Total	6,942	3,700
1778/79		
Albany Fort	4,437	1,534
Henley House	1,947	1,097
Gloucester House	1,171	794
Total	7,555	3,425
1779/80		
Albany Fort	6,174	2,225
Henley House	1,824	1,387
Gloucester House	2,489	1,668
Total	10,487	5,280
1780/81		
Albany Fort	4,140	1,155
Henley House	1,832	1,326
Gloucester House	2,165	1,324
Total	8,137	3,805
1781/82		
Albany Fort	4,714	2,195
Henley House	624	441
Gloucester House	4,355	2,752
Total	9,693	5,388
1782/83		
Albany Fort	4,729	1,441
Henley House	1,709	1,332
Gloucester House	4,013	2,200
Total	10,451	4,973

	Value of Total Trade (made beaver)	Quantity of Beaver Skins
1783/84		
Albany Fort	4,015	973
Henley House	436	368
Gloucester House	2,522	1,818
Total	6,973	3,159
1784/85		
Albany Fort	3,657	1,433
Henley House	1,067	795
Gloucester House	4,691	2,839
Total	9,415	5,607
1785/86		
Albany Fort	3,659	865
Henley House	2,106	1,443
Gloucester House	4,847	2,811
Osnaburgh House	379	290
Total	10,991	5,490
1786/87		
Albany Fort	4,703	1,756
Henley House	2,114	1,310
Gloucester House	4,103	2,050
Osnaburgh House	1,391	885
Total	12,311	6,001
1787/88		
Albany Fort	5,074	2,059
Henley House	2,179	1,525
Gloucester House	2,545	2,740
Osnaburgh House	4,349	2,364
Total	14,147	8,688
1788/89		
Albany Fort	4,224	1,523
Henley House	2,167	1,697
Gloucester House	2,697	1,764
Osnaburgh House	4,823	3,092
Cat Lake	1,115	861
Total	15,026	8,937

	Value of Total Trade (made beaver)	Quantity of Beaver Skins
1789/90		
Albany Fort	4,302	1,506
Henley House	1,579	1,200
Gloucester House	2,765	2,234
Osnaburgh House	3,701	2,731
Cat Lake	1,310	1,149
Total	13,657	8,820
1790/91		
Albany Fort	4,257	1,445
Henley House	2,019	1,414
Gloucester House	2,863	2,096
Osnaburgh House	3,644	2,463
Cat Lake	1,745	1,537
Red Lake	2,445	1,513
Total	16,973	10,468
1791/92		
Albany Fort	3,408	1,391
Henley House	1,440	1,084
Gloucester House	2,978	2,387
Osnaburgh House	3,838	2,867
Red Lake	2,296	1,648
Lac Seul	472	252
St. Anns Lake	440	188
Total	15,502	9,817
1792/93		
Albany Fort	2,872	1,446
Henley House	1,748	1,138
Gloucester House	1,170	966
Osnaburgh House	3,253	1,975
Cat Lake	1,013	737
Red Lake	1,738	1,258
Portage de l'Isle	2,302	1,404
St. Anns Lake	572	328
Total	14,668	9,252

	Value of Total Trade (made beaver)	Quantity of Beaver Skins
1793/94		
Albany Fort	3,000	1,690
Henley House	745	679
Gloucester House	1,236	1,092
Osnaburgh House	2,253	1,764
Cat Lake	840	831
Red Lake	1,263	1,011
Portage de l'Isle	1,500	957
Lac la Pluie	1,163	821
Red River	1,166	607
St. Anns Lake	702	451
Total	13,868	9,903
1794/95		
Albany Fort	5,083	2,692
Henley House	1,121	899
Gloucester House	1,702	1,318
Osnaburgh House	2,466	1,692
Cat Lake	1,575	1,451
Red Lake	1,868	1,282
Portage de l'Isle	1,555	955
Lac la Pluie	1,309	614
Red River	2,384	1,012
St. Anns Lake	978	662
Total	20,041	12,577
1795/96		
Albany Fort	4,569	1,666
Henley House	864	729
Martins Fall	2,313	1,731
Osnaburgh House	2,965	1,958
Cat Lake	3,016	2,715
Wepinaban	1,016	642
Lac la Pluie	1,000	592
Point au Foutre	1,090	701
Fort Suspense	1,591	1,151
Red River	4,207	2,380
St. Anns Lake	1,413	844
Total	24,044	15,108

	Value of Total Trade (made beaver)	Quantity of Beaver Skins
1796/97		
Albany Fort	3,952	1,127
Henley House	612	437
Martins Fall	2,951	1,813
Osnaburgh House	3,843	2,527
Lake Sanderson	2,183	1,802
Wepinaban	1,237	557
Lac la Pluie	1,197	660
Point au Foutre	1,440	879
Red River	4,619	2,441
St. Anns Lake	1,801	892
Post Doubtful	1,720	1,608
Total	25,555	14,743
1797/98		
Albany Fort	3,447	1,671
Henley House	335	254
Martins Fall	2,893	2,136
Osnaburgh House	3,091	2,136
Lake Sanderson	2,757	2,275
Wepinaban	1,976	1,541
Point au Foutre	1,408	1,198
Red River	6,857	3,799
St. Anns Lake	1,435	765
Post Doubtful	1,378	897
Total	25,577	16,672
1798/99		
Albany Fort	4,020	1,585
Henley House	703	642
Martins Fall	3,289	2,484
Osnaburgh House	2,621	2,017
Lake Sanderson	2,934	2,439
Wepinaban	2,066	1,729
Point au Foutre	1,724	1,155
Red River	8,023	1,683
St. Anns Lake	1,702	1,032
Post Doubtful	1,458	1,121
Total	28,540	15,887

	Value of Total Trade (made beaver)	Quantity of Beaver Skins
1799/1800		
Albany Fort	4,000	1,865
Henley House	1,232	1,111
Martins Fall	2,054	1,376
Osnaburgh House	1,407	996
Lake Sanderson	2,423	1,969
Wepinaban	781	628
Point au Foutre	1,502	1,181
Red River	5,559	1,131
St. Anns Lake	993	382
Post Doubtful	1,500	1,028
Total	21,511	11,667
1800-1805 (data not available)		
1805/06		
Albany Fort	7,205	2,381
Henley House	776	663
Martins Fall	2,579	1,737
Osnaburgh House	1,605	999
Red Lake	211	57
Lake Sanderson	2,111	1,202
Red River	6,399	628
Total	20,886	6,667
1806/07		
Albany Fort	6,433	4,020
Henley House	1,735	1,713
Martins Fall	4,183	3,272
Osnaburgh House	2,092	1,438
Lake Sanderson	1,672	916
Red River	5,103	513
Total	21,218	11,872
1807/08 (data not available)		
1808/09		
Albany Fort	4,367	2,865
Henley House	1,412	1,357
Martins Fall	3,701	2,954
Osnaburgh House	2,227	1,457
Lake Sanderson	1,863	952
Wepinaban	1,259	358
Pembina River	2,815	222
Red River	4,325	418
Total	21,969	10,583

	Value of Total Trade (made beaver)	Quantity of Beaver Skins
1809/10		
Albany Fort	4,237	2,122
Henley House	1,742	1,618
Martins Fall	2,875	2,108
Osnaburgh House	2,413	1,692
Lake Sanderson	1,847	575
Wepinaban	599	120
Pembina River	2,752	202
Red River	5,455	196
Total	21,920	8,633
1810/11 (data not available)		
1811/12		
Albany Fort	2,470	2,428
Henley House	872	866
Martins Fall	2,572	2,554
Osnaburgh House	2,285	2,206
Total	8,199	8,054
1812/13		
Albany Fort	--	--
Henley House	--	--
Martins Fall	--	--
Osnaburgh House	--	--
Total	5,500	5,428
1813/14		
Albany Fort	--	2,751
Henley House	--	790
Martins Fall	--	1,703
Osnaburgh House	--	1,523
Total	--	6,767
1814/15-1820/21 (data not available)		

Severn House and Inland District Fur Returns, 1760-1821

	Value of Total Trade (made beaver)	Quantity of Beaver Skins
1760/61		
Severn House	6,368	4,614
1761/62		
Severn House	6,485	4,483
1762/63		
Severn House	5,628	2,236
1763/64		
Severn House	5,141	3,015
1764/65		
Severn House	5,171	2,605
1765/66		
Severn House	5,455	3,684
1766/67		
Severn House	3,354	1,588
1767/68		
Severn House	4,275	1,865
1768/69		
Severn House	6,672	3,167
1769/70		
Severn House	5,119	1,690
1770/71		
Severn House	5,400	1,716
1771/72		
Severn House	3,731	1,286
1772/73		
Severn House	3,968	1,865
1773/74		
Severn House	4,852	2,314
1774/75		
Severn House	4,451	1,930
1775/76		
Severn House	4,139	2,097

	Value of Total Trade (made beaver)	Quantity of Beaver Skins
1776/77 Severn House	7,254	3,334
1777/78 Severn House	4,092	1,348
1778/79 Severn House	3,495	1,017
1779/80 Severn House	3,458	1,396
1780/81 Severn House	3,550	1,596
1781/82 Severn House	4,065	1,955
1782/83 Severn House (abandoned)		
1783/84 Severn House	2,418	1,590
1784/85 Severn House	6,041	3,985
1785/86 Severn House	5,312	3,278
1786/87 Severn House	--	--
1787/88 Severn House	7,488	3,374
1788/89 Severn House	7,213	3,677
1789/90 Severn House	8,048	5,178
1790/91 Severn House	9,259	4,370
1791/92 Severn House	10,945	6,040
1792/93 Severn House	7,847	4,002

	Value of Total Trade (made beaver)	Quantity of Beaver Skins
1793/94 Severn House	6,978	4,408
1794/95 Severn House	7,572	4,089
1795/96 Severn House	10,771	5,285
1796/97 Severn House	6,081	3,051
1797/98 Severn House	5,298	2,703
1798/99 Severn House	5,005	2,916
1799/1800 Severn House	6,147	3,207
1800/01 Severn House	5,118	2,449
1801/02 Severn House	5,107	2,269
1802/03 Severn House	5,197	3,322
1803/04 Severn House	5,167	2,273
1804/05 Severn House	5,331	2,280
1805/06 Severn House	6,177	2,718
1806/07 Severn House	6,650	1,296
1807/08 Severn House	6,407	2,894
1808/09 Severn House	5,361	2,698

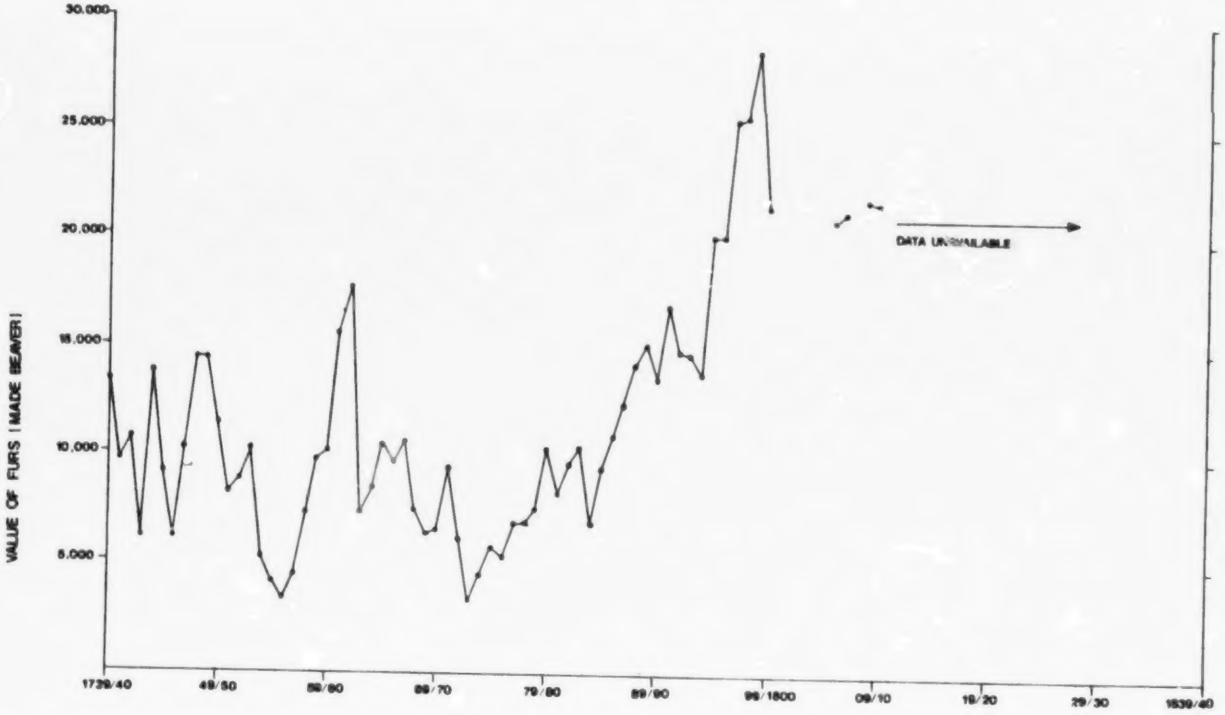
	Value of Total Trade (made beaver)	Quantity of Beaver Skins
1809/10		
Severn House	6,331	2,084
Trout Lake	1,693	807
Sandy Lake	645	112
Total	8,669	3,003
1810/11		
Severn House	--	1,170
Trout Lake	--	1,330
Total	--	2,500
1811/12		
Severn House	--	585
Trout Lake	--	754
Total	--	1,339
1812/13		
Severn House	--	270
Trout Lake	--	775
Total	--	1,045
1813/14		
Severn House (district total)		1,529
1814/15		
Severn House (data not available)		
1815/16		
Severn House	--	534
Trout Lake	--	648
Total	--	1,182
1816/17-1820/21 (data not available)		

York Factory Fur Returns, 1760-1821
(includes only furs traded at the factory)

	Value of Total Trade (made beaver)	Quantity of Beaver Skins
1760/61	33,689	13,456
1761/62	37,342	14,899
1762/63	25,505	7,880
1763/64	31,363	12,617
1764/65	29,112	13,886
1765/66	27,874	12,119
1766/67	31,640	11,659
1767/68	18,324	6,229
1768/69	22,039	9,875
1769/70	34,002	11,620
1770/71	28,175	10,440
1771/72	21,577	6,767
1772/73	22,790	6,820
1773/74	7,652	3,164
1774/75	15,175	6,665
1775/76	8,366	4,002
1776/77	9,939	4,625
1777/78	7,873	2,860
1778/79	7,043	3,425
1779/80	7,265	2,909
1780/81	11,698	6,841
1781/82	6,606	3,565
1782/83 (abandoned)		
1783/84	2,832	1,145
1784/85	4,436	2,870
1785/86	6,150	4,077
1786/87	11,483	7,507
1787/88	11,536	6,807
1788/89	11,196	7,691
1789/90	12,001	9,651
1790/91	11,557	8,865
1791/92	13,750	11,272
1792/93	12,405	10,052
1793/94	11,496	9,690
1794/95	--	--
1795/96	--	--
1796/97	--	--
1797/98	--	--
1798/99	5,127	--
1799/1800	7,933	--
1800/01	6,766	--
1801/02	8,389	--
1802/03	5,577	--
1803/04	5,255	--

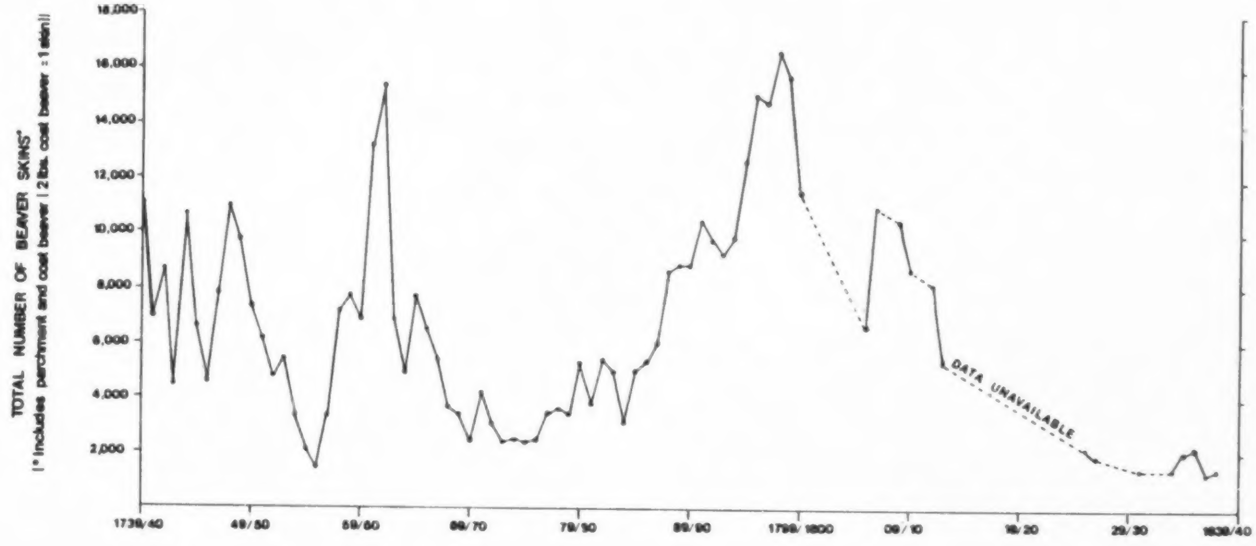
	Value of Total Trade (made beaver)	Quantity of Beaver Skins
1804/05	6,742	1,009
1805/06	6,641	1,377
1806/07	7,856	1,454
1807/08	5,621	1,502
1808/09	6,055	1,738
1809/10	7,451	1,393
1810/11	--	--
1811/12	--	854
1812/13	--	586
1813/14	--	357
1814/15	--	1,062
1815/16	--	463
1816/17-1820/21 (data not available)		

FIGURE 30: TOTAL VALUE OF FUR RETURNS (MADE BEAVER) - ALBANY FORT, 1739/40 - 1809/10



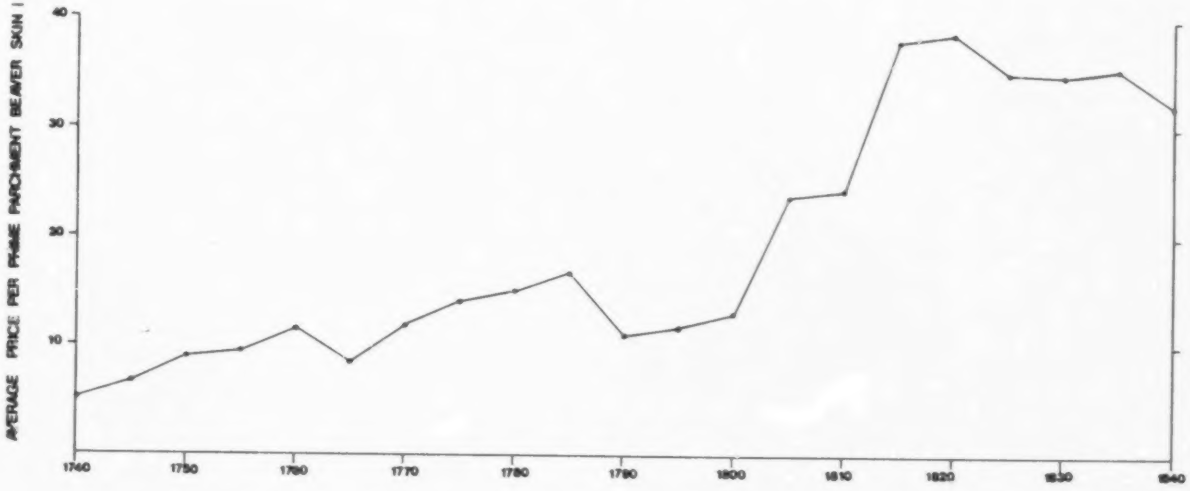
SOURCES: HBCA, B.3/d/40 - 130

FIGURE 31: TOTAL BEAVER RETURNS ALBANY FORT, 1739/40 - 1839/40



SOURCES: HBCA, B.3/d/40-134; B.135/h/1

FIGURE 32: AVERAGE LONDON PRICE PAID FOR HBC PARCHMENT BEAVER, 1740 - 1840



SOURCES: HBCA, A.48/1-9; A.54/2-151; A.63/5

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